The survival and re-emergence of family farming: A study of the Holsworthy area of west Devon

Thesis

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THE SURVIVAL AND RE-EMERGENCE OF FAMILY FARMING: A STUDY OF THE HOLSWORTHY AREA OF WEST DEVON.

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Sociology Discipline, The Open University.

October, 1986.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The debts incurred during Ph.D. work undertaken, at intervals, during eight years of rural research are obviously enormous. My first thanks must go to the Open University: for the support of library and computer staff and those on the 'admin' side; for academic help and encouragement I thank Stuart Hall, Dennis Mills, Phil Sarre and Michael Wilson. Above all, of course, I am indebted to my supervisors Peter Hamilton and Ken Thompson - whatever their private thoughts may have been they never appeared to doubt that I would 'get there' in the end. I thank them for their support and patience.

I am grateful to the following for guiding me to materials or taking time to read particular sections or working papers: Tony Bradley, Tal Davies, John Dunford, Ruth Gasson, Howard Newby, Richard Munton, Michael Redclift, David Taylor. Nor must I forget the invaluable friendship and intellectual stimulus of my colleagues in other research during the last four years - Graham Cox and Philip Lowe. The following institutions provided valued support and help: Devon County Records Office and West Country Studies Library, Exeter Agricultural Economics Unit and University Library, Institute of Historical Research University of London, Oxford Bodlean Library and Institute of Agricultural Economics, Public Records Office Kew, University of Bath. Heartfelt thanks also go to Jackie Beard of the University of Exeter Computer Unit, who arranged for the transfer of data from the OU to Exeter and subsequently assisted enormously in the application of SPSS to the data and in running numerous tasks. For cartographic assistance in preparing the maps and Figure 4.1 I am grateful to Tony Atkin, cartographer at the College of St Mark and St John Plymouth. Thanks also to John Yeo National Farmers' Union Holsworthy Branch secretary at the time of the study whose general views and assistance in providing a sample were invaluable. As a farmers' representative he eased my entry into the field as did Lt. Col Molesworth St. Aubyn of Tetcott as a landowner. The contemporary photographs were kindly taken, on my behalf, by James Ravilious. The historical photographs I selected from the Beaford Archive and I am grateful to Archive staff for their assistance. The photographs remain the copyright of James Ravilious and of the Archive. My thanks also go to those farmers with whom I have talked, learned and worked over many years. John Hawkins has cheerfully helped me on a number of queries. Ralph and Etta Glanville, John and Gladys Hill, John and Ethel Nancekivell have all been and remain close friends. They perhaps little realise the insights they have provided on 'family farming'. And I am indebted more than I can say to Dick and Edna Branch on whose Beaworthy farm I worked over many summers. Without their friendship I would probably never have undertaken a study in the Holsworthy area at all. Warm thanks must go to the 100 Devon farmers who agreed to be interviewed and gave so freely of time, opinions and hospitality. I will always be in their debt. Finally appreciation to my parents who first encouraged and supported me in my interests in farming and to my wife Hilary who has probably heard more rural sociology than she ever expected! - but that rarely seems to have dampened her patience, encouragement and support - thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on an historical study of agriculture in West Devon and interviews with one hundred farmers in the area. The way in which family labour farming has adapted to the changing economic and social conditions of the twentieth century is analysed. The process of specialisation of production, the rise of owner-occupation of land and the continued shedding of farm labour are documented. Particular attention is devoted to ways of conceptualising family farming in rural sociology both as a specific form of economic production within capitalism and as a component of a traditional middle class in society. The persistence, indeed re-emergence, of familial production in agriculture is explained in the context of the resilience of family farming itself and a number of constraints to wholesale change in the industry. These constraints include the nature of land in agricultural production and the ways in which family farming is itself adapted and transformed to meet the changing conditions for its reproduction set by other sectors of a capitalist economy and through the state's involvement in agricultural policy.

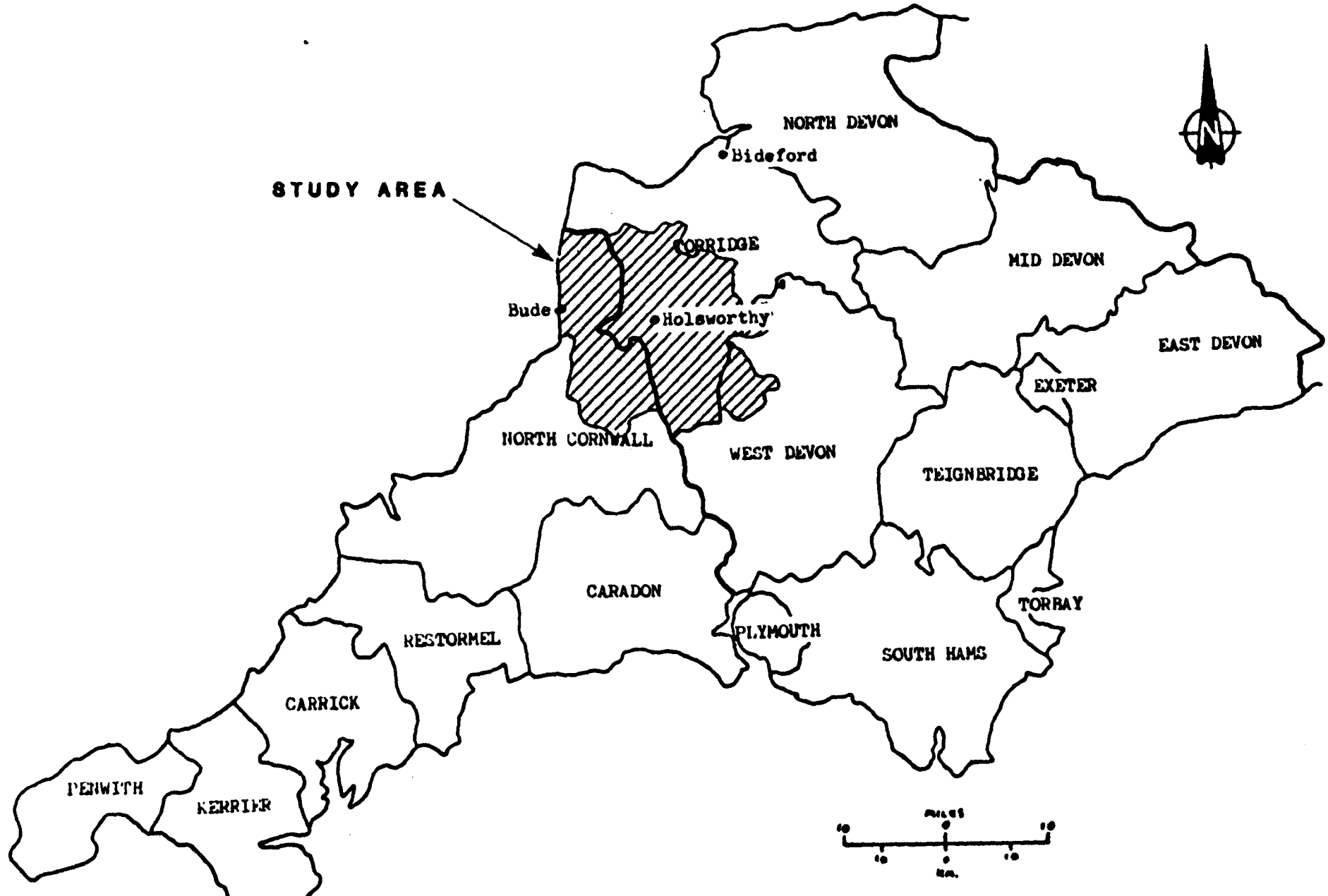
Chapter 1

Family Farming: A Problem in the Sociology of Agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on an historical study of agriculture in West Devon and on interviews conducted with one hundred farmers in the area. The manner in which family labour farming has adapted to the changing economic and social conditions of the twentieth century is documented. Particular attention is devoted to the process of specialisation of production, the rise of owner-occupation of land and the continued shedding of farm labour. This leads to a consideration of ways of conceptualising family farming in rural sociology, both as a specific form of economic production within capitalism and as a component of a traditional middle class in society. The persistence, indeed re-emergence, of familial production in agriculture is explained in the context of the resilience of family farming itself and a number of constraints to wholesale change in the industry. Chief among these are the nature of land in agricultural production and the ways in which family farming is itself adapted and transformed to meet the changing conditions for its reproduction set by other sectors of a capitalist economy and through the state's involvement in agricultural policy.

The research is based on a case-study of family farming in an area of West Devon and North Cornwall, centred on the small market town of Holsworthy as shown in the Map below (1). The term family farming is used to refer to farming where the farmer, aided in some instances by members of his family, provides the major component of the labour force necessary for the running of the farm. It is the importance of family labour in agriculture generally, and in the pastoral western and northern areas of Britain in particular, which prompts special attention


NORTH DEVON
Bideford
STUDY AREA
CORRIDGE
Bude
Holsworthy
MID DEVON
EAST DEVON
EXETER
NORTH CORNWALL
WEST DEVON
TEIGNBRIDGE
CARADON
TORBAY
PLYMOUTH
SOUTH HAMS
RESTORMEL
CARRICK
PENWITH
KERRIER

here. The number of hired workers in British agriculture has declined steadily throughout most of this century, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the total farm labour force. There has been a corresponding proportionate increase in the importance of the farmer and members of the farm family in the labour force. This process has been particularly marked since the Second World War. Between 1960 and 1979, for example, the number of workers in UK agriculture fell by roughly a half, but that of farmers by only one third (2). Nearly three-quarters of UK farms now employ no full-time hired workers, the proportion in West Devon being even higher. It is a process which causes something of a 'problem' for traditional sociological analysis. Both Marxist and Weberian social theory has, until recently, confidently predicted the demise of what are characterised as 'laggardly' and 'traditional' family enterprises in the economy. Marx, and more especially Lenin, expected the acceleration of a process of differentiation in agriculture, whereby peasants would emerge as fully-fledged capitalists or alternatively sink into an army of landless labourers. By similar reasoning Weber expected each branch of economic activity to be characterised by a growth of bureaucracy and a more complex division of labour.

While the contrasting change to familial production may be regarded as a 'natural' development to those in the industry - certainly a number of the farmers interviewed provided a powerful articulation of the 'advantages' of family farming - many of those outside will see the typical family farmer as occupying an atypical position in capitalist society in that he is both owner of the means of production and the direct producer. The functions of management, land ownership (or effective control in the case of tenants), control of capital and the

provision of labour are allocated within the farm family. Family workers involved in the enterprise alongside the farmer will not usually be paid full wages for more than a short period of the family development cycle. Similarly wage labour will be employed only for short periods seasonally when labour demands peak or when necessitated by the position in the family labour cycle. However while these labour arrangements contrast with those of capitalist production, raising a number of questions about how familial production within a capitalist economy should be understood, especially if some notion of a labour theory of value is employed, the family farmer is often as technically sophisticated as his capitalist neighbour. Furthermore the family producer may compete, sometimes very effectively, with the capitalist in the same input and commodity markets.

Such observations point to an area ripe for research, and it is the aim of this thesis to provide answers to some of the questions which arise for any formulation of an adequate sociological and political-economic theory of contemporary British agriculture. There is, for instance, a need to understand what implications such modern family farmers have for class theory. How are producers to be conceptualised in class terms and what points of class cleavage (if any) exist either within the family farm sector or between family farmers and other groups in society? Do the answers to these questions throw any light on wider debates on the 'middle-class' and to what extent do family farmers share a similar position to members of the middle-class?

THEORISING FAMILY FARMING: THE WORK OF HARRIET FRIEDMANN

In particular the study seeks to explain the conditions - economic, technical, political and ideological - for the reproduction of family farming by making use of Hariet Friedmann's notions of commoditisation and a double specification of simple commodity production (3). Friedmann calls for the surrender of the term 'peasant' as a fully elaborated concept, to make way for an analytical specification of forms of production, based on internal characteristics of the unit of production and the external characteristics of the social formation (4), or, as she puts it in a later paper, the mode of production (5). Friedmann suggests that in order to theorise family farms under advanced capitalism two things are required:

> first, elaboration of simple commodity production as a category of political economy; and second, the history of its dynamics in relation to capitalism.(6)

Thus there is a "double specification" of the simple commodity form of production whereby internal and external characteristics "determine the conditions of reproduction of the form and the manner in which its circuits of reproduction intersect with those of other classes" (7).

There is no suggestion in Friedmann's work that the precise conditions of reproduction are necesarily given in the analytic notion of simple commodity production (SCP). Nor should the notion be restricted to any particular spatial or temporal setting. SCP is not strictly for Friedmann, as it is for Poulantzas, "historically the form of transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode" (8). Spatial and temporal location and precise conditions of reproduction are essentially empirical and should not distort the theoretical elaboration of SCP:

> capitalism and the capitalist enterprise secure their own conditions, but simple commodity production depends on the conditions given by the capitalist mode of production. ... the historical relations between capitalist and simple commodity forms of production are indeterminate. The theory of simple commodity production in agriculture requires additional concepts to explain the emergence, reproduction, decomposition, and transformation of both forms of production, including the conditions set for the other when the two coexist within a sector. (9)

SCP then has one logical requirement, the existence of the capitalist mode of production. SCP is a logical category developed within a political-economic theory of capitalism. It is dependent upon "generalised commodity production". The importance which Friedmann attaches to commoditisation is crucial. For SCP to exist a fully developed capitalist commodity market is absolutely essential:

> As a logical category, simple commodity production implies minimally that all external relations of the enterprise are commodity relations, that is, the enterprise sells all its produce, saving nothing for direct consumption, and buys all it consumes, both for means of production and for sustaining the life of the labourers. In order for this condition to hold, all products required to begin and renew production .... and all those for consumption by people in the enterprise, must also be available as commodities. (10)

This is not to imply that the simple commodity producer is governed by the market in exactly the same way as the capitalist producer. The producer is subject to the market, the law of value in Friedmann's terminology, but the goals of the producer, and hence reactions to market forces, are not necessarily identical to those of the capitalist. For Friedmann this is particularly important when the question of the family subsistence orientation of farm households is raised. Fully developed commodity relations are quite consistent with a "structurally determined goal of subsistence" (11). Thus the goal of family subsistence should not be confused with subsistence production for direct consumption. The internal organisation and goals of the production unit are given further attention below, but first it is

important to consider the implications these ideas have for the peasant notion.

Friedmann differs from a number of writers who have brought the notion of SCP into the peasant debate, in that she does not simply wish to see SCP replacing the peasant notion nor alternatively being put alongside it as an equivalent concept (12). Instead she claims that "it is important to distinguish between 'simple commodity production' and 'peasantry' on the basis of the status of each within political economy" (13). SCP is a theoretical elaboration within political economy. Empirically family producers will approximate, to a greater or lesser extent, to the analytical category according to the degree to which they have been subject to the process of commoditisation. 'Peasant' does not occupy a similar position within theory. It is not an abstraction derived from the laws of motion of either feudal or capitalist modes of production. The term has been applied to producers in radically different societies and with very different relations to a dominant mode of production. The term 'peasant' is ambiguous and has been derived through extremes of empirical generalisation to subsume disparate concrete historical situations (14).

However Friedmann does not dispense altogether with the peasant notion. While peasants may have no status within political economy they may be "defined negatively and provisionally by the resistance of their reproduction to commoditisation, which in turn rests on immobility of labour, land, and credit within the larger economy" (15). In this sense peasants represent a process, a process of resistance to the forces, inherent within the capitalist mode of production, which seek to bring

family producers fully within the commodity circuit (16). Empirically peasants are likely, therefore, to be 'traditional' producers resisting externally imposed forces of modernisation.

One of the main aims of this thesis, in looking at the conditions for the persistence of family farming, is to explore the resistance to the development of a 'pure' SCP in the context of West Devon. Friedmann analyses at some length the ways in which SCP may be prevented from attaining full development:

> Whatever the level of specialisation in production of commodities, if household reproduction is based on reciprocal ties, both horizontal and vertical, for renewal of means of production and subsistence, then reproduction resists commoditisation. If access to land, labour, credit, and product markets is mediated through direct, non-monetary ties to other households or other classes, and if these ties are reproduced through institutionally stable reproductive mechanisms, then commodity relations are limited in their ability to penetrate the cycle of reproduction. For expositional simplicity, households whose reproduction occurs through communal and particularistic class relations are provisionally called 'peasants'. Their conditions of reproduction and relations to other households and classes are historically variable and do not approximate any deductive concept. (17)

Analysis of historical variation in the modes of resistance to commoditisation offers a significant way forward for rural sociological studies of family farmers. It is clear in Friedmann's position that resistance to commoditisation should not be seen as purely a voluntarist or behavioural notion. Resistance may or may not involve deliberate or conscious strategies on the part of producers. Crucially resistance is a theoretical concept referring to any processes which result in incomplete commoditisation.

Such processes may include strategies whereby farmers seek to continue certain practices which are not fully commoditised, for example

subsistence production. There may be structural constraints, rooted in certain legal anomalies such as the use of common land. There may also be a process of exclusion as a form of social closure in the relations between family farmers and other dominant groups (18). There is no reason to give theoretical prominence to any particular form of resistance. It is an anlaytical task in each concrete situation to isolate the contrasting processes of resistance where they can be seen to operate. There will be much empirical variation in the same way as the conditions for the reproduction of family farming will vary. While most approaches to the persistence of family production have emphasised an alternative peasant 'rationale' or constraints preventing capital penetration of the peasantry less attention has been paid to the questions of closure and exclusion. Exclusionary closure is defined by Parkin as:

> the attempt by one group to secure for itself a privileged position at the expense of some other group through a process of subordination ... exclusionary closure represents the use of power in a downward direction (19).

The extent to which resistance is characterised by such exclusion is a matter of some concern in this study. Resistance can generally be looked at in terms of internal, local and external relations, and is therefore central to the processes surrounding the reproduction of family farming within capitalism.

If Friedmann's theoretical notions offer certain helpful insights into how to proceed in an analysis of the conditions for the persistence of family farming we can also learn from the very different empirical studies of agriculture which have taken place in the UK. In this context both the work of Howard Newby and the earlier community studies in

Britain need to be given some consideration. A major concern of the post-war community studies was to detail the ethnographic characteristics of communities deemed to be in irreversible decline (20). It was a chance to record for posterity the nature of gemeinschaft, at home in a rural setting. What this approach essentially ammounted to was that rural life, and especially farming as the basis of the rural way of life, was seen as natural and traditional, in itself unchanging but subject to the destructive external forces of urbanism.

BRITISH RURAL COMMUNITY STUDIES

The British rural community studies of the 1950 and 1960s were largely concentrated in the uplands and pastoral north and west of the British Isles. Furthermore even within these areas they concentrated specifically on the remoter agricultural communities. It is important to emphasise how the emphasis on gemeinschaft also led them to focus on discrete spatially bounded communities. Many of the studies involved a close attention to the cultural and ethnographic characteristics of farmers, but rarely was agriculture addressed as the central issue of a study. The emphasis on community meant that agriculture was not seen in its wider context within a local and national economy. For example Arensberg and Kimball's original intention of comparing a small market town with the surrounding countryside, which promised at least some consideration of the relations between the two, was dropped in favour of a study of a "farming locality" and the "behaviour of the persons" within the locality (21).

Arensberg and Kimball's study of a western Ireland community provided the pioneering analysis of the community study genre. They emphasised the stable qualities of rural life from a strongly structural-functionalist point of view, which led them to posit the overwhelming importance of "two institutions of characteristic form ... the family and the rural community" (22). They discuss the nature of kinship networks, the role of marriage and inheritance, and the over-riding "goal" of keeping the name on the land. Land and agriculture are analysed primarily in the context of kinship and inheritance within the community. Land becomes a reference point in a study of certain cultural beliefs and practices related to the continuity of family and community. Any emphasis on land management and agricultural practice is from within a functionalist perspective which stresses the role of such factors in the maintenance of a particular pattern of kinship, property ownership and community structure. Man's relation to the land is seen in terms of the cultural importance attached to ownership and its function in the processes of continuity and change within the rural community. There is little reference to the economics of production nor to social relations of men and women in production.

Even where attachment to land has not involved a family's historically continuous occupation of a particular plot of land, the notion of 'attachment' to land in general can still be seen as important as an integrating cultural symbol within the community. Thus Alwyn D. Rees emphasises the "agricultural ladder" as central to social life and change in the Welsh community he studied (23). W.M. Williams goes further in positing an active land market as central to the "dynamic-equilibrium" of the Ashworthy community (24). His focus is on

the integration or interpolation of this agricultiral flux into the social and kinship organisation of the rural community. Common to these approaches is a holism which emphasises the integration of agriculture and ecology (25) with kinship, community relations and social continuity.

This idea of holism or unity is close to the notion of gemeinschaft, although some significant modifications are offered by what Williams terms the "state of internal adjustments between one part and another" (26). As he says this offers "a much less neat and tidy concept than the orthodox Gemeinschaft view of rural social structure" (27). However even this approach is in danger of leaving two main questions unanswered. The first concerns the role of non land-occupying members of a rural community, particularly farm workers and non-agricultural workers. With the notable exception of Littlejohn (28) most of the early community studies either analytically marginalised local class relations or concentrated on areas of farmily farming where capitalist relations of production within the farm unit were rare. Moreover the agricultural focus of the studies often serves to direct attention away from non-farming class groups within the community. For example Williams' earlier study of Gosforth provides a detailed account of an interactional local stratification system in which farmers appear only on one or two points of the six point scale (29). However the economic activities and nature of the property holding of some of the groups is given scant attention compared to the attention devoted to the agricultural way of life, nature of landholding, and the like (30).

To some extent the neglect of non-agricultural or land-owning elements

has been remedied by the work on community power by Newby et al (31), and in a number of more recent community studies. The second question is of more immediate relevance to the questions which this thesis attempts to answer. This concerns the social (political, economic and ideological) relations entered into by farmers with actors or agencies outside the specific milieux of local kin and community networks. These include farmers' market relations, relations with other fractions of capital, and relations with the state as demonstrated in the formation and implementation of government agricultural policy. These relations are crucial to an understanding of the changing conditions for the reproduction of family farming. Of all the community studies "Ashworthy" provides the most interesting starting point for this thesis, both theoretically and because of its geographical location. It also provides one of the last of the 'old school' community studies to be carried out before the 'new' rural sociological studies of Newby in East Anglia, which we must also now consider.

FROM ASHWORTHY TO EAST ANGLIA

This section provides a consideration of both Williams' study of Ashworthy and Newby' work in East Anglia. In both cases insights into the nature of family farming are provided, but in both the information on the nature of family farm production is scant, as peripheral to the analysis as it is represented as peripheral in geographical terms by both authors. In Newby's case this is primarily a function of the nature of the geographical area in which research has been undertaken, but in Williams' case there are more fundamental theoretical reasons for the lack of material. Williams' study area is dominated by family farming,

but his interest in production and reproduction is subordinated primarily to questions of kinship and the social system.

Williams' "dynamic-equilibrium" approach serves to retain for his work a foot in the traditional "gemeinschaft" camp, at the same time as representing a new departure. The approach is clearly influenced, not only by the complexities of the empirical phenomena which Williams encountered, but also by the structural-functionalist model derived from Talcott Parsons. Whereas in the cultural anthropology of Rees and Arensberg and Kimball the functionalist influence is such that a society is shown at one particular point in time, Williams' work is more in the sociological framework of Parsons, for whom process and change are critical (32). Williams' understanding of rural social change as a "dynamic equilibrium" is put as follows:

> While the social structure as a whole appears relatively unchanged and unchanging in the absence of external stimuli, within it constant and irregular changes are in fact taking place. Country life, as exemplified by Ashworthy, is subject to piecemeal changes, is constantly in a state of internal adjustment between one part and another (33).

This equilibrium is seen as largely "ecological", referring to man's changing relationship to the land. Williams also seeks to avoid conceptualising the community in isolation:

> It will be argued that - in spite of its large measure of self-sufficiency - Ashworthy must be regarded as a part of a larger whole and that its social structure is intelligible only when seen in this light. It is true that the handful of parishes considered here are themselves related in turn to still greater groupings and also that changes on a national scale affect the lives of people in Ashworthy (34).

Ashworthy's state of "dynamic equilibrium" and its links with the world outside the parish boundaries are in many ways parts of the same argument. Williams is at pains to describe the "constantly changing

pattern of landholding" (35), which is the basis of the equilibrium. This in its turn implies an in-flow and an out-flow of farming families, and thus that Ashworthy is part of a "social area much larger than itself" (36).

This movement and the importance of the wider social area are described at some length chiefly through the case-histories of individual families and farms. This represents a considerable departure from some of the earlier community studies. Nonetheless in spite of the more dynamic emphasis the analysis is essentially conducted at the level of the locale with only relatively limited reference to a wider framework of analysis. Although at pains to point out that the perpetuation of family farming is not solely an internal affair, little attention is devoted to the national and regional economy nor to government agricultural policy. His crucial contribution is to recognise the importance of the economics of land ownership and the land market. At the same time he uses this appreciation to inform a more traditional concern with the "ecological relationship between man and the land" (37). In particular he wishes to explore how change in land-holding "contributes to and is a reflection of an attitude towards the relationship between family and the land" (38).

Williams' compares his findings concerning the land market with the traditional research findings in many other parts of Europe concerning attachment to a particular piece of land:

> In Ashworthy, continuity is seen to be the handing-on of a way of life, not of a particular tract of land. A farmhouse may have certain sentimental associations, but the land that goes with it is, at it were, a means to an end, to be sold or transformed according to circumstances (39).

Of course involvement in the land market is only one way in which adaptations may be made in order to preserve "farming as a way of life" (40). Perhaps the most important legacy of Williams' study is this emphasis on adaptation made by farmers in order to achieve certain goals. One of the aims of this thesis therefore might be seen as an assessment of the degree to which "farming as a way of life" still exists as a goal within the Devon farming community. In other words to what extent do non-economic factors determine the pattern of agricultural activity or the degree of resistance to commoditisation?

There is a need here to go beyond solely considering the land market when looking at the means of adaptation. Williams' failure to explore other forms of adaptation is, of course, a result of his concern to understand processes of local change rather than the conditions for the reproduction of family farming per se. As a result he pays only scant attention to a number of external factors which affect the nature of family farming. For example government policy, chiefly changes in the regulations governing the production of milk, is mentioned as being important in determining farming practice, but clearly its significance is not seen as of great moment:

> Farm practice has, through generations of experience, been adapted to suit the natural environment, but there are, of course, other factors which influence the type of agriculture. .... capital resources, government policy and a number of external economic pressures bring about changes from time to time. (41)

Neither the nature of government policy nor the external economic factors are detailed, nor is any indication given as to how such economic and political decisions are reached and implemented, and the role (if any) of the local community in these processes. It is one of

the conclusions of this thesis that the linkages between farmers and the political community are crucial to understanding the ways in which family farms have survived.

Thus the main ommission of Williams' work is any kind of 'political-economic' analysis of family farming. Even when considering questions of property law and taxation, crucial to his central analysis of inheritance, the impression is given that farmers are passive recipients of a uniform state policy. Furthermore the external influences are seen to be of far less importance than the internal "dynamic-equilibrium". What is required is work that allows for internal change and adaptation at the same time as exploring relations within and outside the locale. It was partly a concern over the inadequacies of the community study tradition which prompted Newby to undertake a very different kind of analysis of agriculture in the mid and late 1970s. His contribution to some of the problems bequeathed by the community studies legacy must now be considered.

Newby's main concern is with social stratification and property relations in agriculture and rural society. In particular he wished to provide a corrective to the tendency for the community studies to be located in remote hill or pastoral farming areas, where family farming usually predominates. For this reason his empirical work was undertaken in an area of arable agriculture in East Anglia where capitalist social relations are dominant. Thus the main axis of stratification is based on the relationship between farmers and hired agricultural workers, a relationship described by Newby as the "deferential dialectic" (42). His early Weberian concern with stratification has been labelled

behaviourist and voluntarist by at least one commentator (43). But his more recent work reveals a more Marxian political-economic perspective drawing on a renewed sociological interest in the role of the state and on a re-reading of Kautsky (44). Notwithstanding these shifts in Newby's work some common themes emerge of relevance to the study of family farming.

First of all Newby's concern for capitalist agriculture precludes a primary attention to family farming. Indeed the East Anglian sample is made up predominantly of large farms. This is so much so that in a paper looking specifically at small farming in the area farms of up to 300 acres are included in the sub-sample, and few of the farms employ no hired labour at all (45). Nonetheless from this sample Newby et al give a picture of an individualistic, entrepreneurial, petit-bourgeoisie. In terms of East Anglian agriculture this group is correctly seen as politically, economically and socially marginal. Marginalisation is perceived in the light of the changing economic and technical conditions of agriculture. Yesterday's 'haute bourgeois' farmer of 2-300 acres, employing three or four men, is today reliant on his own and contractors' labour. He is likely to find the necessary capitalisation for contemporary arable farming increasingly difficult. His market position is marginal too. By the same token he is likely to be socially marginal in a local community increasingly 'dominated' by newcomers of professional middle-class origin and the larger farmers. The notion of marginalisation thus has key theoretical significance in the analysis, but it is clearly based on conditions of particular relevance to the geographical context of East Anglia.

Newby et al do not provide a theory of family farm production to explain its persistence, as against its marginalisation, in some geographical areas. Because family farming is empirically marginal it is also seen as an homogenous group within agriculture, as Figure 1 shows. The classification of farmers, based on involvement in husbandry and market orientation, clearly discriminates well between different kinds of capitalist producers of arable crops. However family farming appears to be merely a residual category. Later in the thesis it will be shown that, in the context of pastoral farming in West Devon, market orientation and direct involvement in husbandry, along with a number of other variables, can also be used to differentiate between family farmers.

Figure 1. Typology of East Anglian Farmers(46)

		Market Orientation.	
		LOW.	HIGH.
Degree of Direct Involvement in Husbandry	LOW	1. Gentleman Farmer	3. Agri-Businessman
	HIGH	2. Family Farmer	4. Active Managerial Farmer

Newby's work provides a number of useful advances on Williams' approach. He situates farmers within the national class structure, as part of the entrepreneurial middle class. His focus on market orientation links

agriculture to the wider economy and the focus on involvement in husbandry directs attention to work practices and sources of variation in work. Newby provides, in short, a valuable sociological account of farming, rather than using farming as a way of looking at other issues such as kinship as in Williams' work. The focus is on an industry and a sector of the economy rather than a community. This is entirely consistent with the aims of this project and at a number of points explicit comparisons between the sociology of agriculture in Devon and East Anglia are made. However it is not possible merely to take on board the same theoretical tools for analysis in Devon. By treating East Anglian farmers, notwithstanding the fourfold typology, as essentially entrepreneurial a whole set of issues on the nature of family production are not directly addressed.

In Newby's scenario, while "traditional" attitudes and lack of market acumen may inhibit full-blooded capitalist enterprise, much as in any other sector of the economy, there is no hint that family farmers may operate with a different set of internal economic rules. Does the differentiation between capitalist and family production mark merely a difference of degree or should we look for two quite separate kinds of economic organisation? In short is it adequate to theorise family farmers as marginalised members of the entrepreneurial middle class? These questions raise issues about the economic organisation of production which while not central to Newby's concerns appear crucial in the light of the predominance of family farming in West Devon and the centrality Williams attaches to the preservation of farming as a way of life.

Footnotes

1. The area covered by the Holsworthy branch of the National Farmers' Union provides the geographical location of the study area. Details of the sampling and distribution of the sample within the 41 parishes comprising the survey area are provided in Appendix 1. The term "West Devon" is used throughout the thesis to refer to the survey area. Its usage should not be confused with any administrative boundaries on the ground. In fact most of the parishes lie within the Torridge District, rather than West Devon Borough which is to the south. By contrast the Devon County Structure Plan area of West Devon does include most of the parishes but a number of additional parishes as well. In addition some of the 41 parishes lie within Cornwall. The boundaries of the districts and 41 parishes are shown on Map 1.

2. BRITTON, D.K. BURRELL, A.M. HILL, B. and RAY, D. (1980) Statistical Handbook of UK Agriculture, Wye College: School of Rural Economics.

3. Friedmann's main pieces of importance are as follows: FRIEDMANN, H. (1978a) World market, state and family farm: social basis of household production in the era of wage labour, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 20 (4), pp.545-586; FRIEDMANN, H. (1978b) Simple commodity production and wage labour in the American Plains, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (1), pp.71-100; FRIEDMANN, H. (1980a) Household production and the national economy: concepts for the analysis of agrarian formations, Journal of Peasant Studies, 7 (2), pp.158-184; FRIEDMANN, H. (1980b) Economic analysis of the Postbellum South: regional economies and world markets, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 22 (4), pp.639-52; FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) The family farm in advanced capitalism: outline of a theory of simple commodity production in agriculture, Paper presented to the American Sociological Association, Toronto.

4. FRIEDMANN, H. (1980a) op. cit. p.160.

5. FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) op. cit. p.7.

6. ibid. p.3.

7. FRIEDMANN, H. (1980a) op. cit. p.161.

8. POULANTZAS, N. (1978) Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, London: Verso. pp.285-286.

9. FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) op. cit. pp.9-10.

10. ibid. p.5. Commoditisation does not hold an equivalent status to capitalism. Rather it is a process within capitalism. The distinction is crucial for a number of reasons. First commoditisation is essential to the full development of either SCP or capitalist production, but the two remain distinct if production relations distinguish between the two. Secondly by keeping commoditisation and capitalism distinct it is possible to avoid equating capitalism with the market economy, the position adopted by Andre Gunder Frank. The opposite position of

distinguishing capitalism and non-capitalism purely by reference to social relations is also avoided, thus by-passing much of the semantic confusion over the term 'peasant'. See FRANK, A.G. (1967) Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil, New York: Monthly Review Press; FRANK, A.G. (1969) Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution, New York: Monthly Review Press; FRANK, A.G. (1972) Lumpen-bourgeoisie: lumpen-development - dependence, class and politics in Latin America, New York: Monthly Review Press. For a discussion of the Frankian and other positions vis-a-vis capitalism and the peasantry see GOODMAN, D. and REDCLIFT, M. (1981) From Peasant to Proletarian. Capitalist Development and Agrarian Transitions, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

11. FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) op. cit. p.34.

12. In this she differs from Bernstein, whose position is otherwise very similiar to Friedmann's. See BERNSTEIN, H. (1978) Notes on capital and peasantry, Review of African Political Economy, 10, pp.60-73; BERNSTEIN, H. (1979) African peasantries: a theoretical framework, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (4), pp.421-443. For a recent instructive assessment of the debate on simple commodity production see SMITH, G. (1985) Reflections on the social relations of simple commodity production, Journal of Peasant Studies, 13 (1), pp.99-108.

13. FRIEDMANN, H. (1980a) op. cit. p.161.

14. ibid.

15. ibid. p.170.

16. Teodor Shanin has also developed the idea of peasants as process. But rather than seeing a process of resistance to commoditisation as a means by which peasants can be distinguished from simple commodity producers he distinguishes between peasants and family farmers on the basis of varying forces of production. In view of the diversity of processes of resistance, going beyond merely the question of productive forces, Shanin's argument here is not entirely convincing. The more general characteristics of his discussion of peasants as process are however helpful. See SHANIN, T. (1979) Defining peasants: conceptualisations and de-conceptualisations. Old and new in a Marxist debate, Peasant Studies, 8 (4), pp.38-60. The 'peasant' literature is extensive and has been surveyed in the preparations for this thesis. On the peasant idea in nineteenth century debates on agriculture in Britain see: BRADLEY, M.E. (1983) Mill on proprietorship, productivity, and population: a theoretical reappraisal, History of Political Economy, 15 (3), pp.423-449; DEWEY, C.J. (1974) The rehabilitation of the peasant proprietor in nineteenth century economic thought, History of Political Economy, 6, pp.17-47. In the last two decades by far the greatest impact on the analysis of peasants has been the work of the Russian agricultural economist Chayanov. See especially: CHAYANOV, A.V. (1966) The Theory of Peasant Economy, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin. Key references in the interpretation of Chayanov include: BANAJI, J. (1976b) Chayanov, Kautsky and Lenin: considerations towards a synthesis, Economic and Political Weekly, Oct 2, pp.1594-1608; DONHAM, D.L. (1981) Beyond the domestic mode of production, Man, 16 (4), pp.515-541;

DURRENBERGER, E.P. Ed. (1984) Chayanov, Peasants and Economic Anthropology, Orlando Florida: Academic Press; DURRENBERGER, E.P. and TANNENBAUM, N. (1979) A reassessment of Chayanov and his recent critics, Peasant Studies, 8 (1), pp.49-63; HARRISON, M. (1975) Chayanov and the economics of the Russian peasantry, Journal of Peasant Studies, 2 (4), pp.389-417; HARRISON, M. (1977) Resource allocation and agrarian class formation: the problem of social mobility among Russian peasant households, 1880-1930 Journal of Peasant Studies, 4 (2), pp.127-161; HARRISON, M. (1977) The peasant mode of production in the work of A.V. Chayanov, Journal of Peasant Studies, 4 (4), pp.323-336; HARRISON, M. (1979) Chayanov and the Marxists, Journal of Peasant Studies, 7 (1), pp.86-100; HUNT, D. (1979) Chayanov's model of peasant household resource allocation, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (3), pp.247-285; MILLAR, J.R. (1970) A reformulation of A.V. Chayanov's theory of the peasant economy, Economic Development and Cultural Change, 18, pp.219-229; PATNAIK, U. (1979) Neo-populism and Marxism: the Chayanovian view of the agrarian question and its fundamental fallacy, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (4), pp.375-420. Other key references include: DALTON, G. (1972) Peasantries in anthropology and history, Current Anthropology, 13 (3-4), pp.385-415; DUGGETT, M. (1975) Marx on peasants, Journal of Peasant Studies, 2 (2), pp.159-182; ENNEW, J. HIRST, P. and TRIBE, K. (1977), 'Peasantry' as an economic category, Journal of Peasant Studies, 4 (3), pp.295-322; MENDRAS, H. (1970) The Vanishing Peasant, London: MIT Press; MINTZ, S. (1973) A note on the definition of peasantries, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1 (1), pp.91-106; SHANIN, T. (1973a) The nature and logic of the peasant economy, part 1, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1 (1), pp.63-80; SHANIN, T. (1973b) The nature and logic of the peasant economy, part 2, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1 (2), pp.186-206; SILVERMAN, S. (1979) The peasant concept in anthropology, Journal of Peasant Studies, 7 (1), pp.49-69.

17. FRIEDMANN, H. (1980a) op. cit. p.163.

18. "Social closure as exclusion" is a term taken from Parkin's work on a general theory of class boundaries in advanced societies. See PARKIN, F. (1979) Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique, London: Tavistock.

19. ibid. p.45.

20. Two general treatments of the community studies are: BELL, C. & NEWBY, H. (1972) Community Studies, London: Allen and Unwin; FRANKENBERG, R. (1966) Communities in Britain Harmondsworth: Penguin. For a recent assessment of agricultural aspects of the studies see CROW, G. (1985) The farm and the village: representations of family farming in post-war British community studies, Paper presented to Rural Economy and Society Study Group Annual Conference, Oxford.

21. ARENSBERG, C.M. & KIMBALL, S.T. (1968) Family and Community in Ireland, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

22. ibid. p.301.

23. REES, A.D. (1950) Life in a Welsh Countryside, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

24. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) A West Country Village: Ashworthy, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

25. Williams uses the term "ecology" to refer to man's relationship with the land.

26. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) op. cit. p.xviii.

27. ibid. p.xviii.

28. LITTLEJOHN, J. (1963) Westrigg: The Sociology of a Cheviot Parish, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

29. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1956) The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

30. This problem is not remedied by this thesis, which also concentrates on agriculture to the exclusion, by and large, of other economic activities. The difference, of course, is that the thesis does not aim to provide a community study but a study of a particular sector of production.

31. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) Property, Paternalism and Power. A Study of East Anglian Farmers, London: Hutchinson.

32. For a summary of Parsons' work see HAMILTON, P. (1983) Talcott Parsons, Chichester: Ellis Horwood.

33. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) op. cit. p.xviii.

34. ibid. p.11.

35. ibid. p.31.

36. ibid. p.39.

37. ibid. p.80.

38. ibid. p.80.

39. ibid. p.80.

40. Williams' focus on the land market in the process of adaptation, arguably to the neglect of other factors, is partly a result of the high level of land transactions at the time of his study. F.M.L. Thompson providing evidence to the Northfield Committee identified three major periods of change in the pattern of occupation in this century. One of these was the period 1950-early 1960s when a considerable proportion of tenanted land was sold to sitting tenants. See: NORTHFIELD COMMITTEE (1979) Report of the Committe of Inquiry into the Acquisition and Occupancy of Agricultural Land, London: HMSO. Cmnd. 7599. pars.58-63.

41. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) op. cit. p.13.

42. NEWBY, H. (1975) The deferential dialectic, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17 (2), pp.139-164.

43. BRADLEY, T. (1981) Capitalism and countryside: rural sociology as political economy, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 5 (4), pp.581-587.

44. See especially NEWBY, H. (1980) Rural sociology, Current Sociology, 28 (1), pp.-141.

45. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1981) Farming for survival, in BECHHOFER, F. and ELLIOT, B. (Eds) The Petite Bourgeoisie in the Class Structure, London: Macmillan.

46. NEWBY, H. et al. (1978) op. cit. p.182.

Chapter 2

Research Methods and the Study Area.

CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

In order to answer the questions posed in the opening chapter a number of complementary methods of investigation were chosen. A sample survey of one hundred farmers in the study area provides the most important data. In focussing on the conditions for the persistence of family farming and the manner in which the process of commoditisation has taken place a temporal framework for the analysis was also essential. Thus the interview survey was designed to seek farmers' own views and experiences of processes of change. But it was also important for the change to be given a longer-time span than the memories of individuals. Consequently the sample survey of one hundred farmers in the study area was supplemented by use of secondary historical data. Details of the sampling procedure adopted, the nature of the fieldwork and the secondary sources used are included in appendices to the thesis (1).

The choice of any area for a case-study of a wider phenomenon is fraught with difficulty, especially in view of the early stage in research at which some sort of decision is required as to the nature and location of the fieldwork area. Questions of the researcher's residence during fieldwork, the availability of a sample, 'clearance' from the appropriate agencies/actors, especially in this case the National Farmers' Union, all had to be faced in the early months of the research when only the barest outline of the major theoretical questions to be asked was available. Nonetheless two powerful factors were present from early in the research which dictated the general nature of the location required for research. First the 'survival of family farming' was posed very early as the main question on which the research was to be based.

Therefore it seemed sensible to look towards a geographical area where family farming was relatively strong numerically.

Secondly such an approach provided something of a response to the aforementioned work of Howard Newby and his colleagues on capitalist farming in East Anglia. Early in the research I received from Howard Newby a draft of the paper specifically addressing the 'family farm' question referred to in the previous chapter (2). The notion of 'marginality' raised by this paper juxtaposed with the numerical predominance of family farming in other areas of the country prompted my wish to assess how family farming had survived. This demanded an investigation of an area of the countryside radically different to the Suffolk of Newby's research. Such a decision, of course, pointed westwards or northwards to the pastoral family farming areas characteristic of northern England, Wales and the South-West.

The choice was further narrowed by the exclusion of Wales on linguistic and ethnic grounds, factors which would have added a somewhat complicated dimension to the problem in hand. Furthermore much of Wales, as well as Northern England, is characterised by upland farming. With its narrow commodity base, special disadvantages and govenment policy measure to overcome these disadvantages the upland areas were considered perhaps too far removed from both Suffolk and a large area of inter-mediate mixed agriculture in England. A survey area in Wales or the Uplands would have introduced factors and problems going beyond the direct needs of this study. What was needed was an area more 'typical' of English lowland family farming. While the area chosen could legitimately be one of 'marginal' farming (ie. on land of relatively

poor quality) it was clear that to choose an upland area designated as a Less Favoured Area by the EEC (3) was likely to lead to particular attention to fundamentally non-agricultural variables in the reproduction of family farming. This is not to suggest a kind of agricultural fundamentalism for state policies are important in other areas too.

Clearly government policies in the rest of the farmed countryside, particularly those of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), are important in the reproduction of family farming, and by the same token such policies are not based on narrowly technical agricultural factors. On the contrary any state policy in the production sphere is inevitably an outcome of political and ideological as well as economic processes. But in the case of the Uplands, family farming is reproduced in the context of an even more complex battery of state practices than in other areas, with landscape and recreation considerations, as well as 'social', considerations influencing government decisions. In addition upland farming is based somewhat narrowly on livestock rearing, so that family farmers are suppliers of the lowland capitalist (and family farming) sector rather than competing in the same sectors.

An area of lowland family farming, with milk, fatstock and crop production, offers particular interest as these commodities are all produced within the capitalist sector as well. Indeed one of the main themes of the thesis is the way in which this competition has produced structural change within the industry so narrowing the commodity base of the family farming sector. By the same measure there is some

differentiation within the lowland sector of agriculture. Arable production is more a feature of the larger farms and dairying and fattening of the smaller farms, but there are few lowland commodities in which production is entirely dominated by either capitalist or family production. Thus family farming in an area, such as West Devon, cannot be said to survive because of a unique product base nor because of 'peculiar' ethnic or non-agricultural factors. West Devon is one of the more marginal agricultural areas of the lowlands. Indeed its agricultural problems are sufficiently grave for a large part of the area to have been taken into the Less Favoured Areas in 1984, fortunately some time after the field-work for this study was undertaken. However until the extension of the LFA West Devon's marginality was not recognised in any substantial manner in special treatment for the area as a whole vis-a-vis other lowland regions. In spite of the physical difficulties facing agriculture in this part of Devon the farms are generally smaller than in the rest of the county and in lowland Britain. The survival of family farming seemed to be of particular interest in such an area.

The region's difficulties had also prompted periodic investigation by MAFF, or MAFF sponsored, researchers (4). However in choosing a study area this particular research legacy was of less importance than the fact that one of the more important of the British community studies had been conducted in this part of Devon. Williams' study of Ashworthy (5), discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, raised a number of unanswered questions appropriate to put alongside the new agenda of research in agricultural sociology. However in spite of the influence of the Ashworthy study this does not provide a re-study. Indeed the

sampling procedure adopted dictated that the two parishes (6) which made up Ashworthy fell just outside the survey area for this project. Accepting a number of the criticisms of "community" as a unit of analysis (7) a wider geographical area was chosen for study.

One final factor influencing the choice of survey area was the fact that I already had a long aquaintance with the area. I already knew a number of farmers, who acted as 'quinea-pigs' in a pilot survey. Past involvement in one community, included within the survey area, was strengthened during the seven months in which I lived in the area undertaking field-work. While there was no formal or deliberate programme of participant-observation or ethnographic study, residence and involvement meant I was able to test out ideas with a greater ease than might otherwise have been the case. 'Being known' also assisted greatly in finding accommodation for the period of fieldwork, the winter-let of a farm holiday cottage, in an area with severe rural housing problems (8).

THE NATURE OF THE SURVEY AREA

W. M. Williams, at the outset of his study of Ashworthy provides an evocative description of its location:

> The newcomer, travelling this way for the first time, sees little of the landscape and can easily lose his route without a good map. Everywhere high banks obscure the view: cows, sheep or a combine-harvester appear suddenly around a corner: the surface of the road is thickly strewn with pot-holes. It is almost as if Man and Nature have joined forces to discourage strangers from visiting the locality (9).

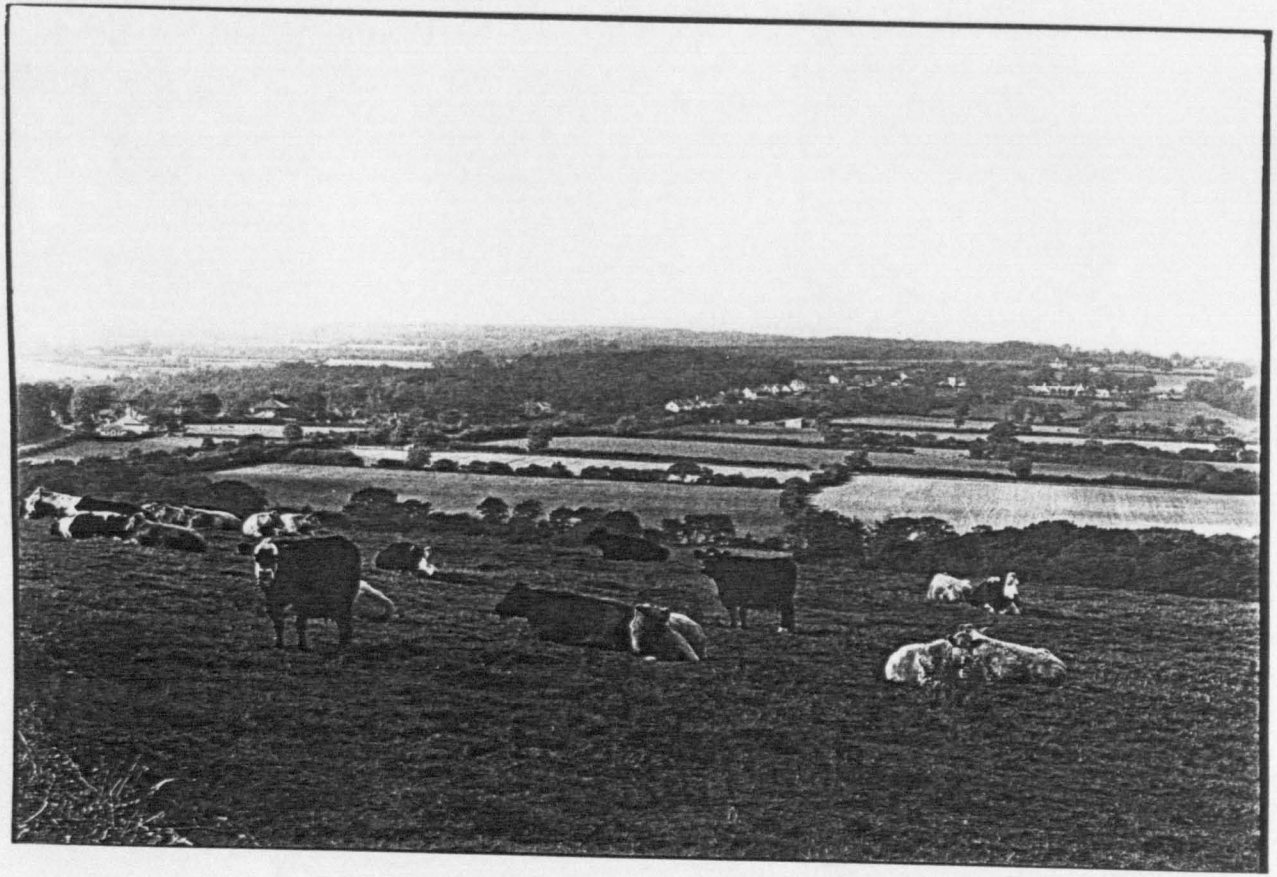
Some thirty years later most of the pot-holes have gone but the high

banks generally remain, although the advent of the flail hedge-trimmer means they are now less likely to be adorned with even higher beech or oak trees. The remoteness remains too for while the roads have improved, the area remains distant from the main centres of population, even within Devon. Holsworthy is 45 miles from Exeter and 40 from Plymouth. The A30 is now a dual-carriageway from Exeter to within six miles of Okehampton, but Holsworthy is a further 22 miles beyond Okehampton, a stretch of road which only passes through one village equi-distant between the two towns, the tiny Halwill Junction with a population of only 430. Situated on the junction of two railway lines, now disused, the village had a pre-Beeching importance long since vanished. That 22 mile stretch of road gives many clues to the nature of the area. It passes small and medium-size dairy and livestock farms, many only just visible from the road, a few isolated houses, and a land that is plainly difficult to farm. Numerous side-roads point to tiny villages, many not even providing a nucleated form of settlement and often with only a hundred or two hundred people.

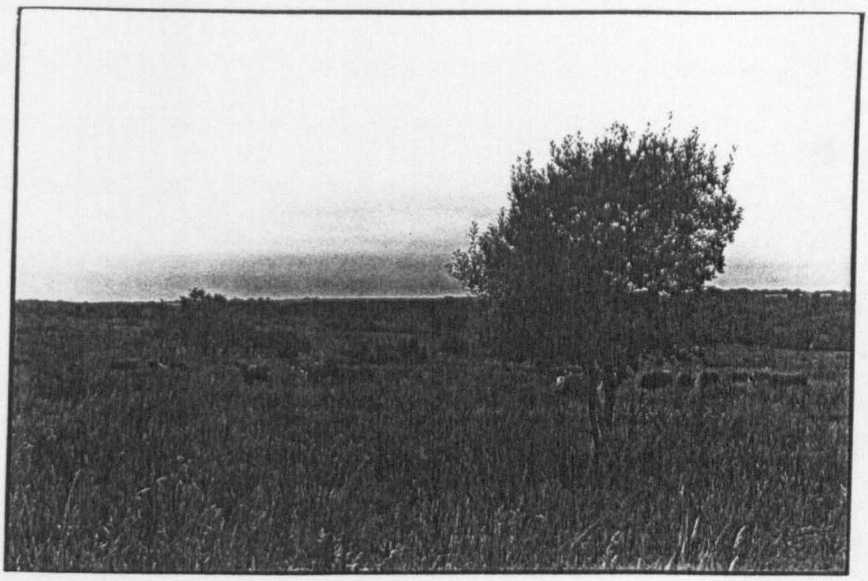
Two miles before Halwill Junction the road rises at Broadbury to 830 feet above sea level, one of the highest points in Devon outside Dartmoor and Exmoor. To the east and south-west can be seen Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor. Looking northwards the country stretches away to the line of the Exmoor hills over 30 miles away: here and to the west lies the survey area. The area has been described by geographers as the North Devon Plain, but that is a misleading title, for although much of the area is of a fairly uniform height of around 600 feet it is heavily dissected by river valleys, leading to numerous small ridges and sharp sided valleys. The landform is such that small fields are common (see

photographs overleaf). The larger fields and better land are often situated on the flatter tops, but here drainage can be a problem. Nowhere has less than forty inches of rainfall a year and in places it approaches or even exceeds sixty inches. The rain and the wind from the west produce a harsher climate than would be expected in such a southerly location. Even the altitude means that frost and snows are by no means infrequent. High up on Broadbury the affects of the winds are obvious, the beech trees on the hedges being shaved of branches on their westerly sides.

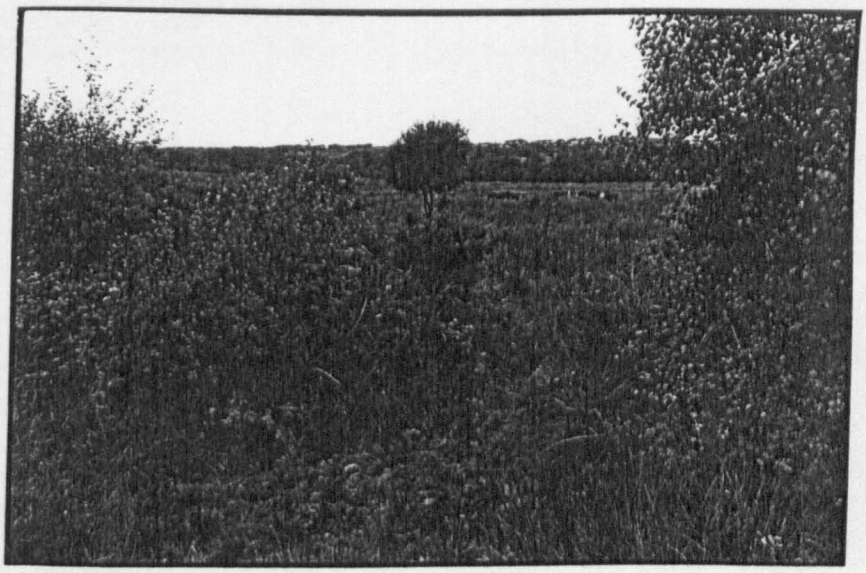
Of even greater notoriety than the landform and the climate is the nature of the soils, which are almost exclusively cold, wet and heavy, derived from the Culm Measures, a geological formation which occupies one third of the county. Only in the north and west, however, does the climate and the depth of the clay make it such an intractable problem. Drainage varies from field to field so that some areas are quite capable of supporting good grassland and even periodic arable cropping. Elsewhere the land is suitable only for rough grazing. These moors, as they are known, may provide bigger tracts of land within the general pattern of small fields (one example, Hollow Moor near Beaworthy, is illustrated overleaf). However technical progress has been made in tackling the problems of drainage on such sites and there are now far fewer moors than when Williams surveyed Ashworthy. But even the maintenance of such improved land is difficult. Four miles on from Halwill Junction on the road to Holsworthy, after a large tract of Forestry Commission land - Halwill Forest was one of the first Forestry



Livestock rearing on Beaworthy farmland looking towards Halwill Junction and Halwill Forest.

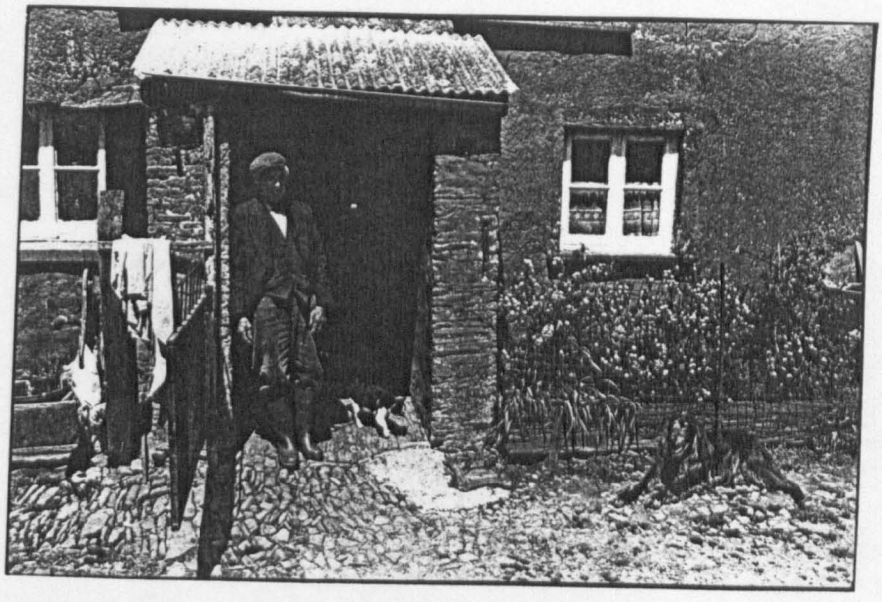


Unenclosed traditional common moorland - Hollow Moor, Northlew.



Commission sites in England planted in the 1920s - there is a stretch of just such 'improved' moor. Suddenly the small field pattern is replaced by an open tract of country, where even several hedges that did exist have been pushed out. But much of the 'improved' land is reverting to rougher pasture again with major infestation of rushes and continuing drainage problems. Indeed the lack of hedges make the place appear even bleaker and less hospitable than it did formerly.

Much of the land in the survey area is classified as grade 5 under the Soil Survey's Land Use Capability Classification and none is better than grade 3 (10). Even grade 3 land is considered to be unsuitable for cropping in most instances or on any regular basis. Grade 5 land is subject to severe drainage problems or late seasons making grassland management difficult and productivity low. The area is dominated by dairy farming and the rearing and fattening of livestock (cattle and sheep). The farms are small, especially considering the quality of the land. There are few large and grand farmhouses, reminders of the high farming characteristic of the early Victorian era common in some areas of lowland England. The houses and older farm buildings are of cob, a mixture of mud and straw, rendered to give protection from the weather. Gardens are usually small and functional. The fruits of forty years of agricultural support and structural adjustment show their mark on many farms in the good cars on concreted yards, new farm bungalows for the retired 'parents', and the ubiquitous modern farm tackle and buildings. However there is none of the conspicous wealth that now characterises many farms of arable England. Indeed many of the smaller farms are still far from prosperous.



Farm houses old and new; the middle is the norm.

Holsworthy itself had a population of only 1,647 at the 1981 Census, but it serves as the main shopping and market centre for an area of at least a hundred square miles. Its livestock market is one of the major markets in the country. The surrounding area is sparsely inhabited and agriculture is a crucial component of the economy, directly providing 14% of male employment in the Torridge District as a whole (11). Most of the villages in the survey area continued to suffer from de-population right up to the 1971 Census, and a number of parishes continue to lose population. However in line with most rural areas the trend was to some extent reversed after 1971. However the growth of population has not been as marked as in the county as a whole, although there are signs that West Devon along with other more remote parts of the county are catching up with the rest of the county in the rate of change. Thus for Devon the rate of growth between 1976 and 1981 was about half that which took place between 1971 and 1976, whereas in the West Devon Structure Plan Area the rate of growth slightly increased. Overall for the decade West Devon showed an increase of 3.7% compared to 6.7% in Devon as a whole (12).

The revival of rural population levels and economies has excited much recent commment (13). Clearly there are increases in the number of retired people coming to the area, and the service sector and light industry has made some progress especially to the north around Barnstaple. Nonetheless it would be a mistake to exaggerate these trends. Agriculture remains crucially important. Indeed renewed agricultural confidence in the 1950s and again in the 1970s, while not increasing the numbers employed directly in the industry, contributed to the vibrancy of the service sector in the rural economy. The area still

imparts a real sense of remoteness. As Williams puts it "the farms and cottages, lying often at the end of a long twisting lane, seem isolated and lonely" (14).

Footnotes

1. See Appendix 1. The Sample; Appendix 2. Fieldwork; Appendix 3. Secondary Sources.

2. NEWBY, H. ROSE, D. SAUNDERS, P.and BELL, C. (1980) Farming for survival: small farmers in the class structure, in BECHHOFER, F and ELLIOT, B. Eds. The Petit Bourgeoisie in the Class Structure, London: Macmillan.

3. This directive was issued by the EEC in 1975 in an attempt to stem the tide of rural depopulation in remote and difficult farming areas. Since that time hill farming in the UK has benefitted from favourable rates of grant and agricultural proces. The full reference is Mountains and Hill Farming and Farming in Certain Less Favoured Areas, Directive 75/268/EEC.

4. A survey of the area's agriculture, conducted in the 1950s by the University of Bristol, with the close co-operation of the Ministry, was never published. I have been fortunate to have access to the material. More recently the Ministry's concern was expressed in BOYER, R.S. and GOWING, J.C. (1980) West Devon Culm Measures Small Farm Project: A study of small farms in the 100-599 SMDs groups in ten parishes in West Devon, MAFF: South Western Region.

5. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) A West Country village Ashworthy, Family, Kinship and Land, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

6. "Ashworthy" is a pseudonym. I am grateful to W. M. Williams for releasing the names of the two parishes comprising "Ashworthy".

7. For discussion of these criticisms see BELL, C. and NEWBY, H. (1972) Community Studies, London: Allen and Unwin.

8. A survey of the housing problems of a number of the survey parishes was conducted by my wife at the same time as my own research. See WINTER, H. (1980) Homes for Locals?, Exeter: Community Council of Devon.

9. WILLIAMS, W. M. (1963) op. cit. p.3.

10. This is based on the land use capability survey conducted in conjunction with the Soil Survey of Great Britain. See HARROD, T.R. (1978) Soils in Devon IV Sheet SS30 (Holsworthy), Harpenden: Soil Survey.

11. 1981 Census. The figure includes self-employed farmers.

12. DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL. (1983) 1981 Data Base, Exeter: DCC Planning Department.

13. There are numerous references to population shifts and changing industrial location. A number of examples are quoted in BRADLEY, T. (1985) Reworking the quiet revolution: industrial and labour market

restructuring in village England, Sociologia Ruralis, 25 (1), pp.40-60.

14. WILLIAMS, W. M. (1963) op. cit. p.3.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3. Family Farming in West Devon to 1939.(1)

INTRODUCTION

The opening chapter devoted particular attention to Harriet Friedmann's theoretical work on peasants and simple commodity production (SCP). One of her own main research topics is the rise of specialised household commodity production of wheat in Canada at the turn of the century. She has likened these producers to the "new" family farmers, especially in livestock production and dairying, emerging in England at the same time (2). Both groups were highly commoditised in Friedmann's terms. Unlike earlier peasants, defined by their resistance to commoditisation and often reproduced only through economic and political relations of dependence, the new specialised household producers engaged in free contractual relations within the capitalist economy (3). Therein lies the novelty of these specialised household producers.

There is nothing in Friedmann's theory to suggest that SCP should emerge at any particular point in the development of capitalism. Nevertheless she does point to the Great Depression at the end of the nineteenth century as a crucial period in the emergence of SCP in England (4). This position is largely derived from the analyses of two agricultural historians of the period, Fletcher and Perry (5). While undoubtdly pointing to a restructuring of agriculture at this time, due especially to the strength of livestock as opposed to arable farming, these two writers do not, however, centrally address the issues of labour relations and forms of production. Further supporting analysis is necessary for Friedmann's position to be accepted. However uncovering the evidence to determine the extent of SCP, or indeed the strength of peasant resistance to SCP, in particular areas during the nineteenth

century is by no means easy.

In the introduction to his Farmlife in Northeast Scotland Ian Carter traces the background to his interest in local agrarian history in his desire to understand local cultural features of the region (6). Rightly he felt compelled to seek their origins in the locally dominant industry, agriculture. Carter recalls his early searches in this direction:

> I began to look for a good modern local agrarian social history. I am still looking: it does not exist. Nor, to a large extent, can one find a corresponding economic history. (7)

Carter's response was to produce such a history himself, written over nearly a decade providing one of the most comprehensive regional agrarian social histories to have been produced. The position with regard to Devon is very similar, notwithstanding the attention which the West Country has attracted in terms of anecdotal "local" histories and, to be fair, a number of noteworthy studies of certain aspects of agrarian history, from social and economic historians.

What is particularly lacking is a thorough going historical analysis of more recent times, especially the nineteenth century. The feudal period is relatively well covered, albeit in a piecemeal manner, but of the nineteenth century there is a dearth of secondary material. Certainly there has been no attempt to trace a political economy of agriculture for Devon along the lines attempted by Carter for Northeast Scotland between 1840 and 1914. It is impossible to remedy this here in the depth and detail undertaken by Carter. What is attempted in this chapter is an analysis of the general and broad characteristics of West Devon's agrarian history up to 1939, using secondary material covering the

earlier period and some primary sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The post 1939 period is reviewed in the next chapter.

One of the problems with material throughout the period covered in this chapter, a recurrent flaw in both contemporary accounts and historical analysis, is that the west of Devon is often tangential and peripheral to the discussion, frequently being subsumed within "Devon" and sometimes even the larger (and vaguer) "West Country". Where it is accorded particular attention it is likely to form part of a wider area than the Holsworthy district alone, taking in Hatherleigh and Okehampton. Thus for some of the analysis evidence has to be used which is derived, as carefully as possible, from material on Devon in general or from a more broadly defined "West Devon". One example of the problem is provided in the well-known county survey of Devon's agriculture undertaken by William Marshall in the late eighteenth century (8). Marshall reports on a "West Devon District" but his investigations took him no closer to the survey area than Okehampton and Hatherleigh, some twenty and fourteen miles from Holsworthy respectively. The most important period to assess for the purposes of this thesis is the nineteenth and twentieth century, but it is also important to give some background to the earlier development of West Devon farming.

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF WEST DEVON AGRICULTURE

The relative poverty of West Devon agriculture is apparent even from the earliest accounts available. Thus in the Domesday Survey the parishes

around Holsworthy had the lowest land values in the county with the exception of land on Dartmoor and Exmoor (9). By the same token Domesday Holsworthy had the greatest amount of meadow per plough team of any area in the county, indicating the pastoral bias of the agriculture (10). The importance of pastoralism was also noted by Curtler who observed in the Domesday Survey a high number of both sheep and goats on Devon manors (11). In the three centuries that followed, sheep production somewhat surprisingly declined and was replaced by more cattle rearing. Thus the Wool Tax assessments of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries give Devon a very low assessment per acre. In 1503 only three counties in England - Lancashire, Northumberland and Cumberland - were lower (12). The pastoral system of agriculture continued although arable production, even in this difficult area, always provided an essential ingredient of the farming pattern. However the arable farming was not conducted according to the open field system characteristic of late medieval lowland England.

For many historians those areas not exhibiting an open-field system of agriculture present a picture of a somewhat static and backward agriculture, and an historically uninteresting one. For historians accustomed to measuring agricultural productivity, and indeed assessing the nature of village life, by the number of ploughs and the extent of open-field cultivation, areas without a fully developed open-field system are seen as in some manner marginal and undeveloped. The very word, "waste", which is used to designate large tracts of these pastoral regions is itself indicative of the status such areas have often assumed in historical discourse. Over the last twenty years, however, such views have been increasingly challenged.

There has been a growing recognition that the open-field system was not as geographically specific as originally thought. Moreover the intrinsic interest of other systems of agriculture has been more widely acknowledged. Thus while some evidence of early open-field agriculture in parts of Devon has been uncovered (13), there has been more significantly a growing body of research on the characteristics of enclosed pastoral agriculture (14). For example the importance of so-called 'wastes' as part of an infield-outfield agriculture has been reassessed. The traditional view was that this was a characteristic of a backward agriculture, based around a Celtic settlement pattern, and a means of utilising fundamentally impoverished soils. However Fox sees the wastes as an integral element of a pastoral agriculture developed specifically in the context of a relatively low population density. He suggests that the outfields, or wastes, were used periodically for an extra crop, a bonus in a primarily pastoral economy and a means to the periodic improvement of the outfield grazing (15). This is not to deny the existence of large tracts of under-utilised land in Devon a thousand years ago, but what is important to note is that an early pastoral economy, with some arable production, was established.

This paved the way for a mode of agricultural development and transition very different to that of the Midlands and Southeast of England. The techniques used were different to those usually utilised in arable areas. For example there is much controversey over one particular practice associated with this kind of farming, that of the shallow ploughing of the turf and the burning and scattering of the debris, a system known as "paring", "burn-beating" or "densheering" (16). While

the short-term improvements to the fertility of the soil might well have been off-set by longer term loss of organic matter, the system nevertheless provided a relatively easy way to take rough tracts of land into cultivation for short periods. However there is evidence that this system of "paring" was also used on the infield well into the nineteenth century (17).

But a more important point of contrast with open-field England concerns the strength of a relatively independent peasantry in early Devon. As far back as the eleventh century the population of Devon, although low, was made up of a high proportion of freeholders on scattered farmsteads, operating a small-scale field system of agriculture in a predominantly pastoral setting. As Hoskins puts it:

> In many parts of Devon, and particularly in the more pastoral west, a considerable number of isolated farmsteads already existed in the eleventh century, too far removed from any other habitations to have anything but an independent field-system of small closes held in severalty.(18)

Elsewhere Hoskins estimates that perhaps a half of all Devon's farms are a thousand years old (19). He points out how the larger villages were often founded by the Saxons as fortresses within a hostile Celtic countryside. Bradworthy, within the survey area, is one example. These were not agricultural centres as such. Hoskins points to considerable place-name evidence for the development of isolated farmsteads. The common Saxon names of "cott" and "worthy" both suggest small early settlements and an enclosed agriculture (20). If this was the pattern inhetited by the Saxons from the Celts it received considerable re-inforcement in the centuries that followed.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was considerable

colonisation of new land by free peasants, given charters by lords of the manor (21). Furthermore the number of freeholders was highest in the west of the county (22). Similarly a large number of small boroughs were encouraged by the local lords to serve as fairs and markets:

> No other county can show, as far as we know, such a number of medieval 'boroughs'. And once again it was the free peasantry, who were the means by which charters were translated into physical reality. (23)

This tradition of freeholding peasants, farming relatively isolated holdings, is reflected in the spatial distribution of contemporary agricultural holdings. However there is little evidence of continuity of holdings by the same family. Changing patterns of lease-holding and tenurial relations over the centuries have resulted in few families like the Seccombes of Seccombe, Germansweek who have farmed their 125 acres since the thirteenth century. The granting of charters to freeholders provided the best means to the landlord by which agricultural expansion could be obtained in the remoter and least accessible parts of the country. It has to be remembered that a freeholding peasantry did not necessarily imply an owner-occupying peasantry secure for all time. Most freeholding peasants were granted charters for a certain period of time. They were not liable to rent or to periodic fines but they were not, strictly speaking, owner-occupiers. The distinction is rather subtle but nevertheless important if we are to understand the means by which the landed class ultimately retained a significant degree of control of tenurial relations.

Macpherson's explanation of the distinction between freeholders and leaseholders casts some light on this:

> there was no simple distinction in law between freeholders and

> leaseholders. Both were tenants. The distinction was in the determinateness of the tenure. Roughly, tenants for life or lives were freeholders; tenants for years, and tenants for years or lives were not. More precisely, tenants whose leases were for a fixed period (eg. five years, ninety-nine years, even a thousand years) and tenants whose leases were for a fixed maximum but indeterminate minimum period (eg. leases for 'ninety-nine years or three lives' whichever was the less) were in law not freeholders, no matter how long the term of the lease. Those whose tenure of land was for an indeterminate period, and who held on free (ie. not base or servile) tenure, were freeholders, whether the tenure was to a man and his heirs for ever, or for the term of his own life or for the term of another's life. (24)

The importance of freeholding in Devon, and West Devon in particular, remained intact certainly until the sixteenth century (25). During the sixteenth century a much greater interest in the wilder and remoter parts of the country emerged from outside land purchasers. Such buyers were attracted, as in the twentieth century, by cheaper land prices. This trend foreshadowed the relatively wide dispersal of land ownership in North and West Devon which caused comment in the nineteenth century. Kew characterises sixteenth century North-west Devon as:

> a poor, infertile and thinly-populated region, with a large but impoverished freeholding class. Very few of its native inhabitants had the resources to contemplate land purchase, and the supply of land was likely to exceed the local demand. The situation was an open invitation to carpet-baggers who duly responded to the opportunity. More than 60 per cent of purchasers came from outside the region (1536-58), although very few non-Devonians were prepared to consider such an unattractive area, ... Lawyers purchased nearly 40 per cent of the land which came onto the market, compared with an average of only 20 per cent in the county as a whole. (26)

A number of these lawyers eventually became large landowners in the area. Nevertheless the overall pattern remained that of fairly widely dispersed ownership by local families, with few landlords owning more than four hundred acres in the early modern period. In the seventeenth century the freeholders were gradually replaced by leaseholders so that by the eighteenth century the peasant freeholder was almost non-existent in Devon. The transition from copyholding to leaseholding was

accomplished even more easily:

> By the letter of the law, the freeholder held by deed and had access to the king's courts in cases of litigation, whereas the copyholder held by copy of the manorial court roll, and had no protection except by the custom of the manor. Except for this difference, ... there was little to distinguish a copyholder from a freeholder. (27)

Of course the "difference" was crucial in terms of the ease with which a copyhold could be converted to a leasehold. The erosion of freeholding certainly did much to ease the path towards landlord capitalism in the eighteenth century. In particular there is evidence that the imposition of arbitrary fines, particularly in the west of England, gave rise to particularly insecure tenures and the creation of virtual leaseholds in all but name among many copyholders (28). The conversion of such customary tenures to leaseholding has been well charted for Devon by both Finberg and Hoskins (29). As Hoskins observes, the consequences of the changes were marked and, in time, disastrous for the tenants:

> When these leases were first granted they were taken for the most part by the former copyholders, who had farmed the land for generations, and the fine and rent was little if any more than they had been accustomed to pay. ... But when these original leases fell in, or new lives were asked for, the full consequences of this change became apparent. The lords could raise fines, or convert the tenure to rack-rent; the leaseholders now had no redress in the manor court, and old families were dispossessed by newcomers who might have more capital than sense. But in 1650 this was not yet apparent. In accepting a lease for lives the copyholder was saved the bother of attending the manor court for public admission to his tenement; but he lost his land eventually. (30)

Brenner has seen in these processes a specific path to agrarian capitalism out of the old feudal order (31). He contrasts the insecurity of the English peasantry with the security of the French peasantry. In England the lords found themselves in a curious position. They were not as weak as their French counter-parts who were unable to prevent the intervention of an absolutist state in support of peasant property (32). On the other hand they were not strong enough, in the face of a revenue

crisis arising from the decline in rents of the late fourteenth century, to re-enserf the peasantry (33). Echoing Hoskins' observations Brenner has suggested that the establishment of new forms of tenancy was a unique way out of the crisis and one that ultimately had unintended consequences:

> Lacking the ability to reimpose some system of extra-economic levy on the peasantry, the lords were obliged to use their remaining feudal powers to further what in the end turned out to be capitalist development. Their continuing control over the land - their maintenance of broad demesnes, as well as their ability to prevent the achievement of full property rights by their customary tenants and ultimately to consign these tenants to the status of leaseholders - proved to be their trump card. (34)

The feudal legacy was the basis of capitalist development. The ability of the lords to establish 'market' rents, accompanied by general economic growth, led to a gradual differentiation of the peasantry, with the rise of the English yeoman committed to specialisation, accumulation and innovation (35).

These trends in Devon agriculture show the county to be in no sense part of a 'Celtic' periphery retaining the predominance of a traditional peasantry. Ethnically the Celtic influence cannot be discounted especially in the west and, of course, the county was remote - until the drainage of the Somerset Levels in the eighteenth century it was connected to the rest of the country by a strip of land only sixteen miles wide at one point (36) - but it was by no means peripheral and laggardly in terms of general economic achievement. As well as its agriculture the county had a number of industries, for example spinning in north and west Devon, and its maritime activities. Assessing pre-Victorian Devon, Finch concludes that:

> far from being a poor and sparsely populated upland region of Britain, the county was, in the early modern period, one of the wealthiest and

> most industrious parts of the country. ..... the best of what the pre-industrial economy could achieve. (37)

It is no surprise therefore that Devon's agriculture should have become throroughly commercialised by the eigtheenth century. In common with a number of counties, it had a more dispersed landowning structure than did the counties most characteristic of English high farming - something which was to be of crucial importance in the changes after 1900 - but this difference masked the more important general growth of landlord agrarian capitalism. The near universality of tenanted land, some 90% of Devon land in the eighteenth century (38), created the incentive for agricultural progress. It is worth noting that the few places where owner-occupying farmers had survived were the "remote corners of the county where some local circumstances had helped the small freeholder to survive" (39). While landlords might have retained certain feudal attitudes, even obligations, they also wanted high rents or "fines". The peasants compelled into the market-place were "thus deprived of direct (non-market) access to their means of subsistence" (40). In other words land subject to economic rents was fully commoditised hence limiting peasant resistance to the market through concentrating solely on self-subsistence production.

However there were limits to the extent of commoditisation imposed by the new leases which, in part, did so much to liberate the forces of capital accumulation from within the feudal economy. The three life lease, for example, came to be disliked by landlords, although it lasted longer in Devon than in many areas. Apart from its longevity one of the reasons for this dislike was that it offered relatively low rents, notwithstanding the periodic fines received when the lease had to be

renewed. The three life lease had certain similarities with owner-occupation through mortgaging. In the case of land under a three life lease, which accounted for two-thirds of land in West Devon at the end of the eighteenth century, a high "fine" initially had to be paid followed by comparatively low rents during the course of the lease. The implications for farming were spelt out by Curtler writing around 1908:

> To these tenures are ascribed much of the backwardness of Devonshire agriculture one hundred years ago; the capital swallowed up by the fine, the want of exertion entailed in paying a small rent, and the prospect of a loss of all interest in the property at the end of the last life, were powerful reasons operating against permanent improvements. (41)

Notwithstanding these drawbacks progress was made in Devon agriculture. The sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries all saw the size of farms gradually increase. This was accompanied by the growth of a class of commercial tenant yeomanry employing hired labour and being dependent upon competitive commodity production. Brenner stresses that it was not the market that caused such changes but property relationships which allowed such processes to take place. As well as the large number of smaller landlords the farms themselves tended to be smaller than in some parts of the country.

Marshall writing in the closing decades of the eighteenth century noted that most Devon farms were between 20 and 40 acres, with few over 200 acres (42). This may under-estimate the importance of the 50-150 acre farms, a group which certainly by the mid ninenteenth century, provided the major part of agricultural production even if it was out-numbered numerically by smaller producers. By the end of the eighteenth century even the life leasehold, and especially its common variant the three-life lease, proved insufficiently attractive to landlords. They sought

instead to establish fixed-term tenancies usually for periods of fourteen or twenty-one years but on occasions for as little as one year. However in Williams' Ashworthy three-lives leases lasted well into the nineteenth century and were still being granted in the 1870s (43).

DEVON FARMING: CHANGES AND CONTRASTS

As Devon's position within the national economy changed and declined - in contrast to its earlier demographic growth and economic strengths (44) - so too the reputation of its farming suffered. By the middle of the eighteenth century regard for Devon agricultural production had slumped dramatically from its high point in seventeenth century England, when Cromwell praised it as the best in England (45). Cromwell's views were borne out by a number of travellers in the seventeenth century, notably Fuller and Westcote. Fuller found Devon to be "a goodley province" and suggested that Virgil if alive would ammend his account of good ploughing in the "Georgics" after a visit to Devon! (46). Westcote pronounced Devon farmers to be "men of free nature and good condition". He commended in particular their practice of paring and burning which was to be so roundly condemned a century and a half later (47).

Not all was praise however - Camden visting the county in 1589 complained of lack of good husbandry and diligence (48). But the real criticsms of Devon's farming began when the cleric Dean Milles surveyed the county's agriculture in the eighteenth century. He found, for example, in Ashwater, one of the larger parishes in West Devon, the cider to be "rough and bad enough" and the size, shape, colour and breed of cattle "not worth remarking" (49). This in spite of the fact that in

the first half of the century the West Devon district had been famous for its cattle (50). It seems that Devon, especially perhaps the remoter parts, lagged behind in reaping the benefit of the improvements to agricultural techniques and animal breeding which characterised the "Agricultural Revolution" of the eighteenth century.

Forty years after Milles, William Marshall found Devon farmers to be "ignorant and conservative" and closer to the labouring class than to emergent agrarian capitalists. Many had risen:

> from servants of the lowest class; and having never had an opportunity of looking beyond the limits of the immediate neighbourhood of their birth and servitude, followed implicitly the paths of their masters. Their KNOWLEDGE is of course confined; and the SPIRIT of IMPROVEMENT deeply buried under an accumulation of custom and prejudice (51).

In other parts of the county Marshall had some praise for the cultivation of temporary grasses, but not so for West Devon which had "no regular course of management; and it must remain in this predicament until turnips and potatoes shall be introduced after wheat or oats, as a fallow crop for barley and ley herbage" (52).

The situation had not improved by the middle of the nineteenth century:

> The farming of Devon is at the present time inferior to that of most of the counties of England...the advantages of a genial climate and a fertile soil needing only the application of greater capital, industry and skill, encourage the hope that Devonshire will before long reinstate itself in the position it held in the sixteenth century, when it was an example of the best farming of the age. (53)

The west of the county was in need of the greatest improvment. As Tanner observed the Holsworthy area "was the most sterile, dreary and worst cultivated tract of land in Devonshire." (54)

The contrasts between farmers must have at times seemed almost as great

as between farmers and labourers, a situation with echoes of today. Thus Caird detected the seeds of improvement in an emerging capitalist class of farmers, at the same time noting the existence of the smaller producers:

> There are two classes of farmers in the county, one consisting of men with small holdings, little elevated above the condition of the labourer, the other of educated agriculturists holding large farms, into which they have introduced improved methods of husbandry. By them draining has been introduced, and the levelling of hedgerows and enlargement of arable fields; the system of irrigated meadows has been extended, and the application of artificial manures practiced. The improvement of the breed of Devon cattle, now one of the most shapely, graceful, and profitable breed in Great Britain, has been by them brought to its present high state of perfection. (55)

Vancouver in 1808 similarly observed the contrast between the smaller and larger farms and noticed a regional dimension. The larger farms occupied the better lands of south and east Devon. In the rich country south of Dartmoor farms with rental values of 500-700 shillings per annum were found.

This contrasts sharply with West Devon where the farms were mostly smaller. The West Devon District is described in the following terms:

> Although there must necessarily be many exceptions to the general size of farms, and character of the occupiers, of a country so widely extended as this district, it may still not be amiss to go a little farther than ordinary into a description of these matters. In the country about East and West Putford, the size of the farms are not represented to exceed 20/- to 50/- per annum; the farmers, though a hard-working people, are supposed to remain stationary with regard to aquisition of property, ... About Holsworthy, the occupations are stated to be from 30/- to 50/- per annum; the farmers are equally laborious, ... In the neighbourhood of Ashwater, the occupations are even smaller than about Holsworthy: these farmers are very industrious, working in general, much harder than the labourers they occasionally employ. (56)

Later in the century further evidence was provided on the incidence of small-scale farming in Devon in two Royal Commissions on Agriculture during the Great Depression (57). R. Henry Rew reported of North Devon

that it was a district of large estates and small farms. Rew also noted a tendency for the number of small farms to increase in number during this period:

> There is some tendency on the part of landowners to divide farms where possible, and only the outlay necessitated in making such alterations probably prevents this tendency from being more marked. Where, as is not infrequently the case, farms were thrown together 20 or 30 years ago, opportunity is now taken when possible to re-divide them. There is greater demand for the smaller farms, and landowners are disposed to prefer the small working farmers. (58)

Rew also comments on the incidence of small-holders engaged in part-time agricultural work. He cites one parish in particular where a landowner had encouraged the formation of such small-holdings. This landowner was W.J. Harris of Highampton who held land in Halwill and Beaworthy. Five hundred acres of this was put into smallholdings of between two and fifty acres (59). Rider Haggard, another seasoned observer of rural England was impressed by the Beaworthy example where the number of holdings is said to have increased from 243 in 1871 to 434 in 1901 (60). As Beaworthy's parish priest explained to Haggard, the local small farmers had not only grown in number but they had survived the depression intact:

> their rents were low, their wants were few and they did almost all their own work. Besides making butter .... their wives "meated" the calves, pigs and poultry. (61)

Harris was more than just a benign landlord. He was also an innovative farmer in his own right. In 1883, for example, a new kind of silage building was demonstrated at his farm (62).

Overall a picture emerges of an agriculture adapting to the new markets. Subsistence production is still important and clearly an important factor in the survival strategies of smaller and larger producers in these depressed years. But it is "the admirable produce markets in all

the market towns" which bring forth particular comments from Rew:

> It is the regular practice for the wives and daughters of the small farmers, or the dairywomen of the large farmers, to take poultry, eggs, butter, and clotted cream, as well as garden produce, honey, etc, into the market once a week ...(63)

All this evidence points to continuity and renewal of family farming in the nineteenth century. The comments of Caird, Vancouver and others show how subsistence orientated familial production was important earlier in the century, implying a resistance to commoditisation which must be linked closely to tenurial conditions and the absence of a strongly entrepreneurial tradition of landlordism. However if peasant resistance provides one root for family farming, so too the emergence of a class of small-scale commodity producers was also important. In looking at the path of commoditisation described by Haggard and Rew it would be a mistake to draw the distinction too sharply, for it seems highly likely that landlords like Harris were encouraging and promoting the potential which already existed. This must act as something of a corrective to the received wisdom of agrarian history concerning the universality of capitalist agriculture from eighteenth century England onwards.

Mingay is one of the few agrarian historians to have grasped the importance of family farming in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries issuing a challenge to those historians who brush aside the evidence:

> It is evident, then, that in spite of the changes of the eighteenth centuries - in spite of the growth of the market, new techniques, enclosure, industrialisation, depression and free trade - the small farmers in general suffered no catastrophic decline in numbers. Anyone who is willing to believe that small farmers 'disappeared' in the eighteenth century must be prepared to explain how it was they re-appeared in such strength in the nineteenth century. (64)

Mingay also highlights the importance of part-time farming, estimating that any eighteenth or nineteenth century occupiers of less than 25

acres would have needed an additional income (65). This would have accounted for some 15% of Devon farmers in the 1850s, in view of the poverty of some of the land in the north and west of the county possibly slightly more.

This evidence raises some doubts about the notion of a new specialist family farmer emerging in England at the turn of the century as a response to new capitalist markets. Thus for Friedmann small holders "are not survivors in any sense from the sixteenth century but a new kind of household producer, a specialised commodity producer." (66) Markets for commodities such as milk and poultry were expanding at the end of the century. The market acumen of small Devon farmers has been testified to, but at the same time this appears to have been combined with a quasi-subsistence (67) orientation which verged on the 'peasant-like'. Clearly family farming became increasingly specialised and commoditised in the twentieth century - in Devon more so in the post 1945 period than at the turn of the century identified as crucial by Friedmann - and the proportionate significance of family farming increased steadily. That much is well recognised, but in the sense that small family holdings were significant throughout the nineteenth century and earlier perhaps there is a measure of continuity and survival.

FAMILY FARMING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY?

This section is headed with a question because, leading on from the concluding words of the last section, there are clearly a range of problems which have to be tackled in any discussion of family farming,

yet which have remained remarkably 'untouched' in both the history and sociology of agriculture. To what extent, numerically, did family farming exist in the nineteenth century? What form did it take and is it more correct to speak of a survival or a (re-)emergence of family farming in the twentieth century? In seeking answers to these questions there are huge problems with the primary and secondary material which needs to be sifted with considerable caution. Much of the data and contemporary comment is concerned with techniques of agricultural production, its economics and the condition of farm workers. This has been reflected in more recent discussions. Thus Finch, in a regional economic history of nineeteenth century Devon devotes sustained attention to both the techniques of agricultural production and to the standard of living of farm workers but gives hardly any mention to the economic and social circumstances of the farmers themselves (68).

The debate on large versus small holdings and peasant proprietorship was of more significance at the level of ideology than in the data it furnished on empirical change within the industry (69). Nor did family farming generally figure very prominently on the agenda of official enquiries until well into the twentieth century (70). The raw data from censuses offers a useful starting point for the analysis. At one level it is clearly the case that the incidence of hired workers in the farm labour force was considerably greater in the nineteenth century than it is today. For Devon as a whole there were three times as many farm workers as farmers in the early part of the nineteenth century. By the 1970s the position had exactly reversed, with three quarters of Devon's full-time agricultural labour force in the 1979 Agricultural Census comprising farmers and members of the farm family. This change has

occurred with some loss of farmers but predominantly it is the hired workers who have departed.

The relative fixity of the holding structure was well illustrated in the case of Ashworthy by W.M. Williams, as shown in Table 3.1 (71). The structure of holdings in 1842 shows a surprising degree of similarity to that of 1960, and an interesting range of farm sizes. Clearly although the yeomen of more than 50 acres must have dominated agricultural production and the local agricultural labour market, there must also have been a significant sub-sector of peasants and family farmers, employing little or no hired labour. Some of these small farmers may have had other sources of income and employed labour for that reason but it is unlikely that all 39 occupiers of less than 50 acres (53% of the total) would have been in that category. While relatively large families, and neighbourly assistance, would have helped to provide the labour requirements of these smaller farms, the labour requirements of the larger farms could not be met in this way. It is interesting to see that in both 1841 and 1960 only three farms of over 300 acres existed in Ashworthy. But whereas in 1960 a 300 acre farm might have employed two or three workers in 1841 the figure would have been double that. Mingay estimates that a mid nineteenth century pasture farm required a labour input of one man per 50 acres (72).

Table 3.1 Distribution of Holdings in Ashworthy, 1841 and 1860. (No of Holdings & Occupiers)

Farm Size Groups	1841		1960	
	Holdings	Occupiers	Holdings	Occupiers
0-5	8	7	7	5
5-20	27	16	10	6
20-50	33	16	17	9
50-100	22	13	27	24
100-150	6	11	13	16
150-300	5	8	12	12
300+	3	3	3	3
TOTALS	104	74	89	75

Table 3.2 Occupational Status of Males aged twenty and over employed in agriculture, 1831. (Percentages)

Occupational Status	West Devon	Devonshire	England
Farmer-Employers	23.2	19.4	15.0
Farmer-Non-Employers	9.0	7.0	10.7
Labourers	67.7	73.6	74.3

Source: National Census.

The implications for the use of hired labour are clear. In spite of the existence of family farming a high proportion of nineteenth century agricultural labour must have been hired. Any suggestion that Devon, as a peripheral and pastoral county, lagged behind the rest of England in the development of capitalist social relations of production cannot be borne out by the figures on labour force composition. On the contrary, as shown in Table 3.2, a higher proportion of Devon farmers, in 1831, employed hired labour than in England as a whole. While the high incidence of hired labour in the total labour force composition is the most striking feature of this Table, the break-down of occupiers into employers or non-employers is also of interest. Thus 26% of Devon farms employed no labour, or to be strictly accurate no males over the age of twenty, compared to 42% for England as a whole.

In West Devon a slightly smaller proportion of hired workers were employed than in England and the rest of Devon, although the difference is not great - labourers made up 67.71% of the male agricultural labour force in the Survey Parishes compared to 73.57% in Devon as a whole. The average number of labourers per employing farmer was 3.43 in the parishes compared to 3.78 in Devon. The proportion of non-employing farmers is 28%. Notwithstanding the overall dominance of capitalist social relations of production these figures indicate a significant family farming component in the agricultural structure of the early part of the last century, a phenomenon not confined to Devon. Table 3.3 shows the changing labour profile of Devon's agriculture over a ninety year period, starting in 1831. Notwithstanding one or two apparent anomalies, for example the number of farmers in 1921 is curiously high, the trends

Table 3.3 Devon Farm Labour Force Composition, 1831-1931.

Labour Force.	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901 c	1911	1921	1931
Farmers	12,684	12,032	10,427	11,325	10,921	9,754	9,636	9,588	10,785	12,803	10,903
Farmers' Relatives (M)	na	na	na	5,221	4,491	4,382	3,805	na	5,571	4,538	na
Farmers' Relatives (F)	na	na	na	4,609	4,393	na	na	na	3,914	913	na
Total Relatives	na	na	na	9,830	8,884	na	na	na	9,485	5,451	na
Total Farmers + Relatives (M)	na	na	na	16,546	15,412	14,036	13,441	14,670	16,356	17,341	na
Farm Bailifs	na	na	na	338	230	402	355	557	394	377	na
Farm Labourers (M) a	35,311	39,148	na	41,461	33,662	29,592	25,743	20,354	21,458	19,080	14,954
Farm Labourers (F) a	na	1,906	na	2,356	1,471	1,196	667	na	na	na	na
Total Labourers	na	41,054	na	43,817	35,133	30,788	26,410	20,354	21,458	19,080	14,954
Ratio of Male Farm Labourers per 100 Farmers & Male Relatives b	na	na	na	250	220	214	194	143	134	112	na

Notes: a.Farm Labourers here include farm labourers and farm servants. b.Farm Labourers here include farm labourers, farm servants and farm bailifs. c.The 1901 figure for relatives supposedly includes females as well as males, but the magnitude indicates that the figure probably only included males and has been treated as such.

are very clear. While the number of farmers over the period held more or less constant the number of farm workers fell from around 44,000 to 19,000 between 1861 and 1921. This shows clearly the trend which has continued in the post-war period. For the country as a whole Britton et al (73) have identified two periods of particularly marked decline in the agricultural labour force, 1860-1890 and 1950-70, the first marking a response to recession in agriculture the second to expansion. This is one of the telling factors in the rise of family farming, namely that the response to contrasting economic conditions in recent history has been to shed labour. In very different circumstances, and for different reasons, the significance of hired labour has steadily declined in both periods.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century agricultural labour was shed as a response to deteriorating product prices on the world market. Arable acreages declined and cost-cutting through mechanisation had begun. At the same time industry continued to absorb surplus rural labour (74). But this process of labour shedding does not necessarily mean that family farmers as a proportion of farm occupiers increased in numbers. As already shown a significant minority of family farmers existed in the nineteenth century. It is possible that this proportion could remain constant with the capitalist farms shedding labour. As referred to above Mingay reckons on one man for fifty acres of grassland and one man for thirty acres of arable in the Victorian period (75). Thus a 300 acre pasture farm required a labour force of at least six men. With three or even four employees in 1931 such a holding would have remained within the capitalist category. However a 100-150 acre grassland farm might well have made the transition from capitalist to

family relations. So to fully understand the implications for the development of family farming we need to look at changes in farm size structure. Unfortunately tracing trends is difficult, as a result of several changes in the manner in which national and agricultural censuses were compiled during the period.

Fortunately a good record of the relationship between farm size and labour force is available from the 1851 national census. Tables 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 reaffirm the tentative findings from the 1831 census.

Table 3.4 Distribution of Agricultural Holdings by Farm Size and Labour Force Size, Devon, 1851. (No of Holdings)

Farm Size Groups (Acres)	Number of Men in Farm Labour Force					
	0	1-4	5-7	8-15	15+	Totals
Under 20	1,015	219	1	0	0	1,235
20-50	920	976	8	3	1	1,908
50-100	730	1,835	86	10	3	2,664
100-150	227	1,465	251	39	5	1,987
150-250	89	968	455	167	7	1,686
250+	32	226	222	250	91	821
No Acreage Stated	0	73	22	4	5	104
TOTALS	3,013	5,762	1,045	473	112	10,405

Table 3.5 Distribution of Agricultural Holdings by Farm Size and Labour Force Size, England and Wales, 1851. (No of Holdings)

Farm Size Groups (Acres)	Number of Farms	Total Acreage	% of Land	% of Farms
Under 5	7,656	19,140	0.08	3.43
5-10	15,804	118,530	0.48	7.08
10-20	27,025	405,375	1.64	12.10
20-30	18,962	474,050	1.92	8.49
30-40	15,099	528,465	2.14	6.76
40-50	13,254	596,430	2.42	5.94
50-75	27,695	1,730,938	7.01	12.40
75-100	16,863	1,475,513	5.98	7.55
100-150	29,020	3,627,500	14.70	13.00
150-200	16,732	2,928,100	11.87	7.49
200-250	12,002	2,700,450	10.94	5.38
250-300	6,399	1,759,725	7.13	2.87
300-350	5,504	1,788,800	7.25	2.47
350-400	2,557	958,875	3.88	1.15
400-500	3,585	1,613,250	6.54	1.61
500-1,000	4,343	2,841,050	11.51	1.95
1,000+	771	1,113,300	4.51	0.35
TOTALS	223,271	24,679,491	100.00	100.02

Table 3.6 Structure of the Farm Labour Force, England and Wales, 1851.

Farm Size Group (No of Labourers Employed)	No of Farmers	No of Labourers	% of Farms	% of Labourers
0	91,698	0	40.70	0.00
1	33,564	33,564	14.90	5.04
2	27,949	55,898	12.40	8.40
3	17,348	52,044	7.70	7.82
4	14,109	56,436	6.27	8.48
5-7	17,920	103,747	7.95	15.59
8-15	14,861	160,155	6.60	24.06
16-25	5,294	103,009	2.35	15.47
25+	2,575	100,798	1.14	15.14
TOTALS	225,318	665,651	100.01	100.00

Although capitalist agriculture was well developed in nineteenth century England and Wales there was a greater diversity in the structure than is sometimes realised. Ironically, in view of the contemporary structure, Devon had less of the very small farms than England and Wales as a whole. Only 30.7% of Devon farms were under 50 acres compared to 43.8% in England and Wales. Neither did Devon have many very large farms, only 0.7% over 500 acres compared to 2.3% in England and Wales. Devon was dominated by the middle range band of farms, no less than 45% of its farms being between 50 and 150 acres, compared to 32.9% in England and Wales. In order to put a little more flesh on these broad statistical bones for Devon as a whole, it is interesting to look at the census

enumerators returns for 1851 in one of the survey parishes, Ashwater.

Table 3.7 gives the same distributions for Ashwater as have already been given for Devon in Table 3.4.

Table 3.7 Distribution of Agricultural Holdings by Farm Size and Labour Force Size, Ashwater, 1851. (No of Holdings)

Farm Size Groups (Acres)	Number of Men in Farm Labour Force					
	0	1-4	5-7	8-15	15	Totals
Under 20	9	0	0	0	0	9
20-50	2	3	0	0	0	5
50-100	4	13	0	0	0	17
100-150	1	6	0	0	0	7
150-250	0	2	1	0	0	3
250+	0	1	1	0	0	2
No Acreage Stated	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	16	25	2	0	0	43

The 1851 Census caused some confusion to the enumerators because of the instruction that "farm servants" should be distinguished from "agricultural labourers" - servants being resident on the farm - and that a separate figure should be given for the "number of labourers" employed on the farm, including "all kinds of workmen employed on the farm, whether they sleep in the house or not" (76). In the case of

Ashwater the enumerators' returns are complete and provide a useful record of the composition of the labour force. The enumerator distinguished house servants from farm servants as well as giving a figure for all hired workers employed on the farm, whether resident servants or not. No distinction between full-time and part-time workers was made, which causes particular difficulties in assessing the significance of part-time farming during this period.

First of all it is plain that Ashwater, even more than Devon as a whole, was dominated by the small-medium size farm. 55.8% of Ashwater farms and 44.7% of Devon farms were between 50 and 150 acres in size. Family farming was apparently more significant in Ashwater than in the county as a whole, with 37% of farms employing no hired labourers at all compared to a figure of 28.9% for Devon. More detailed analysis of the census certainly shows the diverse social structure of Ashwater in 1851. At the one end of the scale one farmer of 400 acres employed six workers, but at the other end were six small farmers recorded as having other occupations. These were a shoemaker farming 12 acres, a thatcher with 12 acres, two blacksmiths one with 20 acres and one with 5 acres, a cordwainer farming just one acre and a general shopkeeper with 51 acres (employing two farm labourers). A further handful of such artisans were also farm labourers. None of the small farmers were recorded as additionally labouring on other farms, although three had less than ten acres of land with no other income sources indicated.

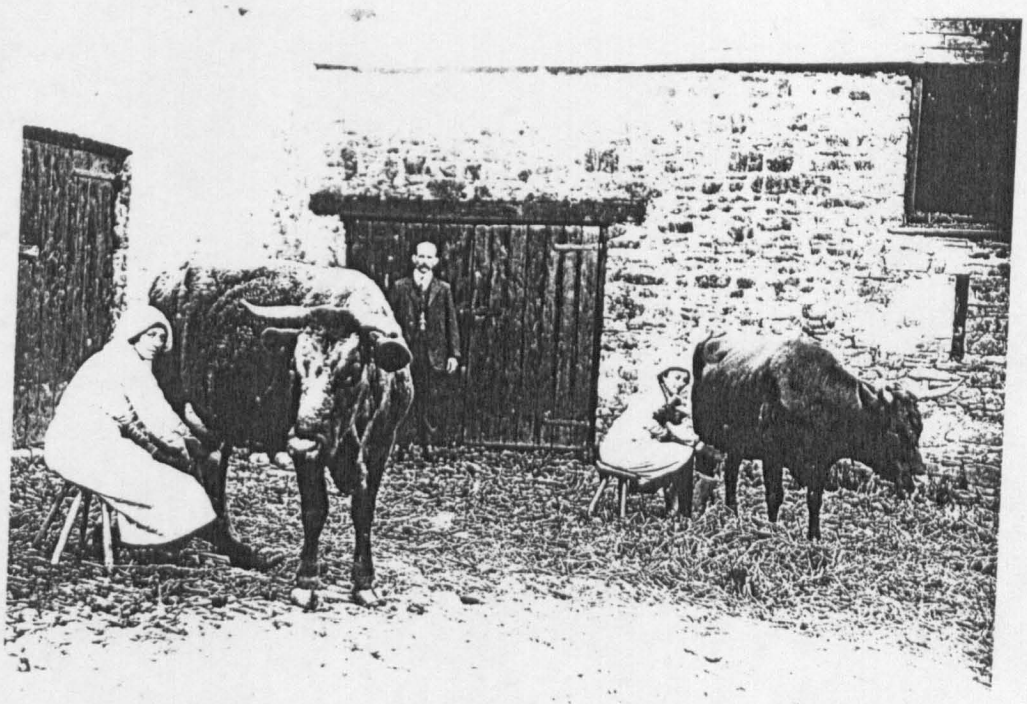
At the higher end of the farm size range the variation in the number of labourers employed was quite considerable. One farmer of 200 acres employed six labourers while another of exactly the same acreage only

three. In neither instance was additional family labour recorded as being available and we can only conclude that different farming regimes, or the use of seasonal labour or neighbourly help, accounted for the variation. On other farms family labour clearly played a crucial role. For example a 264 acre farmer employing just two labourers clearly depended on his sons of 24, 16 and 13 in age. The incidence of farm servants in Ashwater was high as it was for the whole of Devon at this time. Thus 31 out of 54 male farm workers employed on the farms of the parish were resident farm servants. There were, in addition, a number of female house servants whose role in the farm economy was also crucial. Kussmaul has described how servants formed the basis of a pre-industrial household economy (77). It is not insignificant that areas such as West Devon retained servants well into the nineteenth century. Indeed the incidence of "live-in" farm workers continued into the twentieth century after the term "farm servant" had itself ceased to be in common parlance. There are examples of this even today.

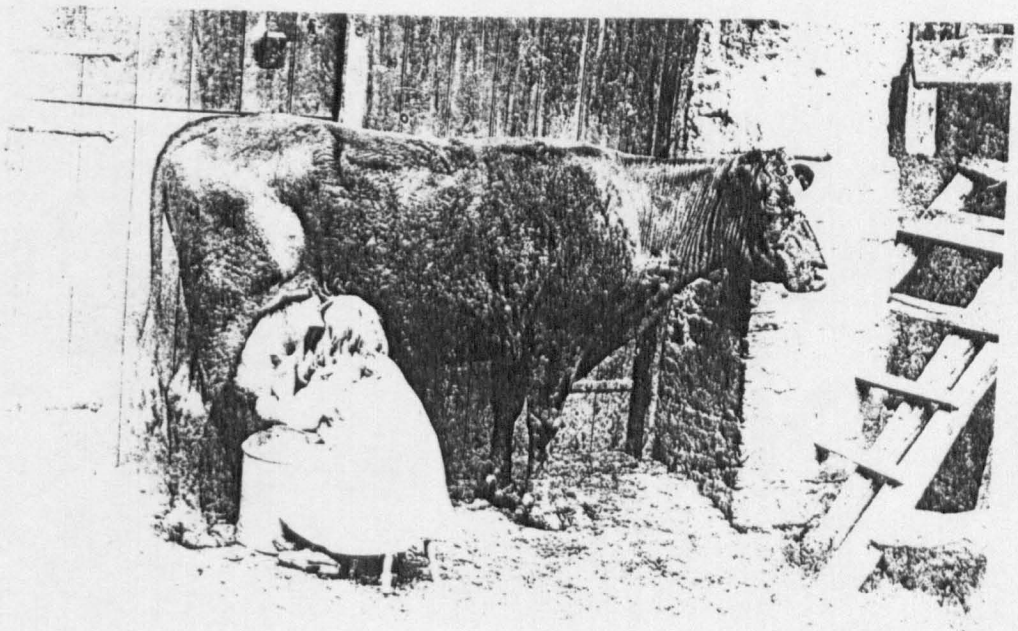
Bouquet has described in some detail the role of farm servants, between childhood and adulthood on Hartland farms up until the twentieth century (78). They were seen as 'members' of the farm household,and were usually contracted for a year's work. Relations were clearly not 'purely' capitalist however exploitative they might have been in some circumstances. The use of servants permitted imbalances of family labour supply and demand at different points in the family development cycle to be corrected, particularly where a small farms were widely scattered geographically. Bouquet sees the demise of the farm servant system as a result of the raising of the school leaving age and of technological change in agriculture. The loss of servants, she concludes, "led to an

increasing emphasis being placed on members born or marrying into the domestic group, as opposed to those recruited through the imbalance of resources" (79). Here, then, one kind of adaptation to familial circumstances is replaced by another - but neither labour process fits easily into the capitalist model.

To conclude this section it is clear that agrarian capitalism was unevenly developed in England and Wales in the nineteenth century. Two thirds of all farms were farmed with the help of no more than two hired workers, and over three-quarters were less than 150 acres in size. However in terms of overall agricultural production family farms were far less significant, only 37% of land being in farms of less than 150 acres. The picture that emerges is essentially very similar to that descibed by Carter for Northeast Scotland. Devon, in common it seems with most counties of England and Wales, was dominated numerically by a group of small-medium farms, dependent on family labour supplemented by hired and servant labour especially at certain points in the family development cycle. It would be wrong to speak of nineteenth century agrarian capitalism as a myth, when a small group of larger farms were of such key importance in terms of total production and when farm workers outnumbered farmers by three to one and on many individual large farms by 10, 15 or 20 to one. The nature of capitalist social relations on farms at this time has been well documented (80), but undoubtdly insufficient attention has been paid to the role of family farmers. With such a high proportion of small farmers, some dependent on selling some of their labour, there is clearly more to the social relations of production than the division between farmer and landless labourer.



Milking - early twentieth century. Ashbury (above) & Sandford (below).



Milking - Hole Farm, Black Torrington.

Mangold lifting at Newton St.Petrock.

LAND OWNERSHIP AND TENURIAL CHANGE

Having discussed the labour composition of agriculture in West Devon during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it is also important to give consideration to another factor of key significance to the local development of family farming. In common with the rest of England in the nineteenth century, Devon was primarily made up of tenanted land. As well as the larger estates the county also contained a large number of small landowners. The survival of small ownership in Devon during the period of expropriation, 1660-1760, is revealed in the Land Tax Assessments studied by Johnson (81). A century later the famous 1873 Domesday Survey of landowners revealed Devon to have a higher than average number of small landowners (82), either as small landlords or owner-occupiers.

Nonetheless large tracts of the county, less in the west than the south and east, were dominated by some very large large owners, one fifth of the county being owned by just sixteen families (83). The full breakdown of land ownership in 1873 is given in Table 3.8 (84).

Table 3.8 The Ownership of Land in Devon in 1873.

Size Groups (Acres)	Number of Owners	Total Acreage	% of Total (excluding waste & holdings of less than 1 acre
20,000+	5	159,555	10.54
10,000-20,000	11	149,486	9.87
5,000-10,000	28	176,988	11.69
2,000-5,000	55	166,681	11.01
1,000-2,000	99	136,283	9.00
300-1,000	( )	242,240*	( )
100-300	(9,964)	257,380*	(47.89)
1-100	( )	196,820*	( )
Total	10,162	1,514,002	100.00
Less than 1 Ac	21,647	2,982	
Commons & Waste	-	77,868	
Grand Total	31,809	1,594,852	

The proportion of the total area of the county in large estates of between a thousand and two thousand acres was 29%, almost identical to the average for all English counties of 29.5%. The variation between counties was quite marked, for example 44% in Shropshire down to 23% in Lincolnshire and 26% in Cornwall. But while Devon is close to the norm

in its share of large estates it has a higher proportion of very small estates. This is shown in Table 3.9 which compares Devon, the county with the ninth highest proportion of land in estates of less than a thousand acres with some other selected counties (85). The incidence of small ownership suggests an important local squirearchy and a significant number of small owner-occupiers and small landlords destined to become owner-occupiers.

Table 3.9 The Estates of the Smaller Landowners in Selected Counties, 1873.

Counties	% of Total Area in Estates of 300-1,000 acs	100-300 acs	1-100 acs	Total 1-1,000 acs
Devon	16	17	13	46
Middlesex	15	19	24	58
Somerset	14	15	18	47
Cornwall	15	16	14	45
Dorset	11	7	7	25
Northumberland	7	4	3	14
England	14	12.5	12	38.5

Estates of under 300 acres occupied some 39% of the land area of England - in West Devon the figure was 55% - at a time when only 10% of the land was owner-occupied (86). Thompson describes these small landowners, who were so significant in Devon, in the following terms:

> The majority then were small landlords holding land as an investment - yielding a sense of social status or security rather than renumerative

> income - either actively made out of savings, or passively retained out of a mixture of calculation and inertia from the time when a family had moved from a smallholding into the world of towns and business. In the upper reaches of Bateman's 'greater yeomen' group there were undoubtdly many who were close to the squires in status, with estates of not much under 1,000 acres which might comprise three or four tenanted farms and a country residence ... It would be surprising if their ranks did not contain a goodly array of men with commerical and manufacturing origins... (87)

The figures from the 1873 Survey do not support this thesis entirely. If the small landowning class had been predominantly dependent on other commercial and manufacturing interests they might be expected to predominate numerically in counties adjacent to the manufacturing centres. As Table 3.9 indicates this is not entirely the case. High numbers of small landowners were recorded not only in Devon, Somerset and Cornwall but also in other remoter rural counties such as Cumberland and Westmorland. Fewer small owners were recorded in counties close to industrial centres, such as Cheshire, Yorkshire and Nottingham. It would seem likely that a number of different circumstances could give rise to a large number of smaller landowners. In Devon links with major commerical activity cannot have been great. Rather these smaller landlords may have had a much longer more continuous occupation of small estates but with limited resources from other sectors of the economy, hence the low investment in agriculture noted by contemporary observers and the rapid demise of the landlord sector early in the twentieth century. Rubinstein has, in fact, suggested that even elsewhere the number of very wealthy entrepreneurs purchasing land in the nineteenth century was very small (88). However existing landlords with land adjacent to or within the growing urban centres were in a position to diversify their economic activity.

Table 3.10 (89) shows the break-down by size group of land holdings held by resident owners in the Survey Parishes. This is not a full record of land ownership in the parishes as only owners of land actually resident can be identified from the returns. By the same token some of the resident owners may have held land outside the boundaries of the parishes. Because of the predominance of small landowners it is assumed that such holdings are not likely to have been of great significance. The land holding of one large landowner resident just outside the Survey Parishes has been recorded because it is known that a high proportion of his land was held within the parishes. The high incidence of small ownership, and the frequency of landowning family names which recur as farmers in contemporary agriculture, lend support to the suggestion that small landowners turned to farming as the landlord-tenant system came under stress in the twentieth century (90).

Table 3.10 The Ownership of Land by Residents in the Survey Parishes, 1873.

Size Groups (Acres)	Number of Owners	Total Acreage	% of Acreage Recorded
5,000+	1	5,290	7.97
2,000-5,000	1	3,744	5.64
1,000-2,000	3	4,303	6.48
300-1,000	33	16,625	25.03
100-300	142	23,511	35.40
1-100	440	12,938	19.48
Total	520	66,411	100.00

By 1900 a slightly higher proportion of land in the Survey Parishes, 15%, was owner-occupied than in the rest of Devon. However this masked considerable variation between parishes. While a quarter of parishes were clearly dominated by the landlord-tenant system, with less than 5% of the land owner-occupied, for another quarter the corresponding figure was over 20%. Table 3.11 gives an indication of the degree of localised concentration of owner-occupation, two parishes being over 40% owner-occupied.

Table 3.11 The Extent of Owner-Occupation in the Survey Parishes, 1900.

Degree of Owner-Occupation (% of Parish Area Owner- Occupied)	Number of Parishes
0-4.99	11
5-9.99	5
10-14.99	9
15-19.99	3
20-29.99	8
30-39.99	2
40+	2
Total	40

If owner-occupation became a significant option for landlords looking for ways out of their difficulties it was also clear that long standing owner-occupiers themselves had some advantages in the years of the

Depression. Financially the absence of rent meant that owner-occupiers could survive in times of depression and expand more rapidly when conditions improved. As one owner-occupier told Henry Rew he "would have gone to smash years ago" if he had had to pay rent (91). Economically the relative prosperity of farming in the west coupled with the ability to 'belt-tighten' meant fewer unlet farms than in other parts of the country during the depression years at the end of the century (92). Thus existing tenants achieved the security of tenure from new legislation which later put them in a good position to purchase their holdings from landlords weakened by low rents. Devon being a pastoral county was better placed to make the adjustments needed in the Depression than some arable counties, as long as rents could be reduced. From the early 1870s until 1910 Devon's corn acreage dropped steadily from 30% to 17% of the farmed area (93).

The broad parameters of the decline of the landlord-tenant system are now well understood (94). By 1979 80% of the land in the Survey Parishes was owner-occupied compared to 60% nationally. The decline of landlordism was largely the result of two inter-related phenomena. First there were successive political challenges to the landed interest as a consequence of the changing social and economic structure of industrial Britain and resulting legislative changes. Secondly the decline was more directly influenced by the passage of two periods of agricultural depression, broken only by the 1914-18 War. The political challenge came under two guises, a general threat to the political ascendancy of the landowners posed by democratic reforms and a more direct attack on landlordism mobilised around the 'land question'. The political decline of the landed interest was, of course, linked to economic decline.

Landowners withstood electoral reform remarkably well through "the politics of compromise and concession" (95). Their decline as a force in government was "gradual and not cataclysmic, half-concealaed and well compensated by prolonged retention of the panopoly of power" (96).

The democratic challenge occurred through reforms in both national and local government. Nationally successive electoral reform measures broadened the franchise to give effective power into the hands of the new commercial and industrial middle classes. Locally the 1888 Local Government Act and the 1894 Act creating Rural Districts and Parish Councils weakened the local landowning interest and gave greater power into the hands of farmers and the local petty bourgeoisie. Such measures did not change things overnight, and it long required a measure of courage, not to mention economic security and independence, to challenge politically the local landlord. In Devon the local artisans and more secure farmers, sometimes owner-occupiers, provided the natural leadership of the 'new order'. These changes were strongly linked in West Devon to the growth of the Bible Christian movement, a Methodist denomination primarily made up of farmers and rural artisans. As Martin has put it:

> Behind the frontage of faith there were economic urges. The farmers hated tithe and the power of the gentry and clergy. Religion gave them a safety valve, opened the floodgates of emotion. This was a farmer's religion, a rural Methodism. (97)

Martin is right to emphasise the role of the farmers for, although farm labourers were represented in the Bible Christian movement the church was hardly a "religion of the dispossessed", as one rather aggressive defender of Anglicanism, quoting somewhat cynically from Richard Niebuhr, has put it (98).

The trustees of the Northlew Bible Christian chapel, for example, comprised in 1848 some three labourers and five "yeomen". A decade later the composition was three labourers, four yeomen, a builder, a miller, a grocer, and a thatcher. The subsequent (late nineteenth century and early twentieth century) decline in the rural artisan occupations and in hired farm working led to the denomination becoming predominantly the preserve of family farmers. In some parishes this was always the case. Thus adjacent to Northlew in Beaworthy all seven founding trustees of the Madworthy Chapel in 1846 were "yeomen". By 1919 the eleven trustees of Madworthy comprised ten farmers and one carpenter (99). The early radicalism of the movement was based on a petit bourgeoise opposition to both Anglicanism and to a lesser extent to Wesleyan Methodism. The latter was dominated in the early nineteenth century by the "thoroughgoing conservative" and autocratic Jabez Bunting (100). Bunting offered little encouragment to those who urged resistance to the established order as, to some extent did both the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists (101).

It was perhaps no coincidence that the Bible Christian movement originated in the parish of Shebbear. As early as 1831 over half the farmers of this parish employed no hired labour. In 1871 there were no less than 46 resident owners of land, and in 1900 27% of the land area was owner-occupied. The growth of Methodism, allied to that of Liberal politics, proved a potent political challenge to landlordism in contrast to the south and east of England where earlier conflicts between landlord and tenant were patched up in a new alliance against the threats posed by organised labour. By contrast agricultural trade unionism was never strongly developed in Devon. Instead militancy was

more likely to come from the farmers. Thus Rew, reporting to a Conservative government, was obviously much disturbed by the demands from tenants for more freedom and greater security encountered in his researches (102).

WEST DEVON FARMING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Many of the trends of the nineteenth century continued in the early years of the twentieth century. In the first decade farming recovered to some extent from the Depression of the previous twenty years and flourished briefly during and immediately after the First World War. Thereafter from 1921 to 1939 it was again plunged into depression. The decline of the landlord tenant system, heralded by the political decline of the landowning class and economic depression in the nineteenth century, took a much more concrete form in the twentieth century with the widescale selling of estates. This did not occur to any great extent until after the 1914-18 War. Indeed in the first decade of the century improved agricultural conditions meant that a number of landlords were able to re-let farms which they had been forced to take in hand due to lack of tenants during the Great Depression. Thus the proportion of owner-occupied land in England and Wales actually declined from 15.4% in 1888 to 12.3% in 1908 (102). So in spite of all the political and economic pressures on the landed interest over forty years the tenanted sector remained as dominant in the first decade of this century as it had been half a century earlier. But all this changed between 1909 and 1927. The changes have been well described by Sturmey who highlights low rents before the war and high rents immediately after, new taxation

legislation, and greater tenant security under the 1908 Agricultural Holdings Act as all contributing to the sales of land that occurred during the period (104).

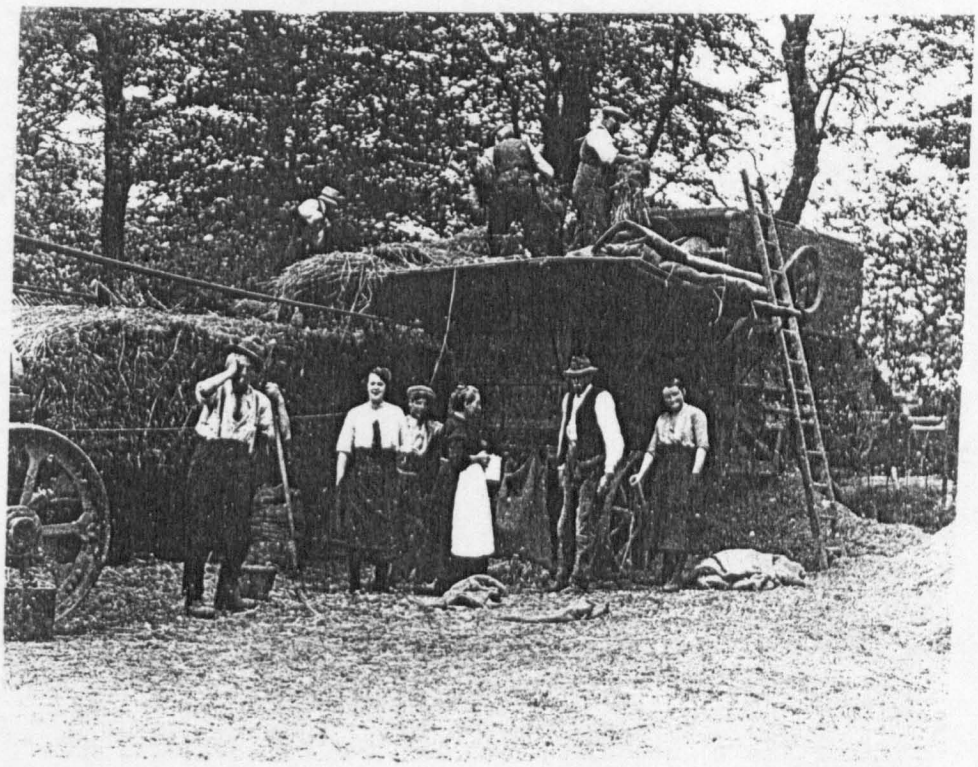
By 1927 36.6% of land in England and Wales was owner-occupied (105). A study by MacGregor of land tenure changes in 20 parishes of mid Devon was undertaken in 1932 (106). Of 216 farmers interviewed 37% were owner-occupiers and 63% tenants. As in West Devon the farms were small to medium in size, 60% being 150 acres or less. MacGregor found that most of the farmers were from farming or wage earning families, "men of small savings". "In this district there is little trace of the capitalist making an investment of agriculture" he observed (107). No less than 25% of the farmers had become owner-occupiers on farms where they or their predecessors had been tenants - tenants had frequently been presented with the choice of buying or vacating their farms. The period was also marked by mobility of occupation even among owner-occupiers - only 13.9% of farmers had been in occupation for more than 20 years. The inter-war period was one of flux. A new order of owner-occupying was being established and this was accompanied by considerable buying and selling of land, bankruptcies among those who had over-committed themeselves, expansion by the few, stabilisation by many, and catastrophic decline for the unfortunate. The nature of 'paying for the land', the form of rent or the manner in which land was commoditised was being transformed. The longer term consequences of this only became apparent much later, when the new found security of the owner-occupiers found expression in the political assertiveness of the National Farmers' Union and the new economics of owner-occupation.

The transformation in the use of hired labour also continued apace. Between 1914 and 1932 the cost of labour doubled while farm prices rose only fractionally (108). Not surprisngly the number of hired workers in Devon agriculture declined during the same period. The days of the massed ranks of hired farm workers and of farm servants were over and the more subtle class relationships of the family farming regime were beginning to emerge. Agricultural production in West Devon continued to be dominated by stock rearing up until 1939. The traditional North Devon cattle remained the dominant livestock in the countryside. The wetness of the ground meant that sheep were still kept in relatively limited numbers, although there was always a place for the hardy local breed the Devon Longwool. Only in the last thirty years have sheep been kept in greater numbers in west Devon as a result of improvements in sheep husbandry of particular benefit to an area such as the Culm measures, particularly improved treatment of foot rot. However two commodities did increase in importance during the inter-war years. Pigs became more common and by the early 1930s Devon had become the third most important county for pigs in the country. Secondly, and in the long run of far greater significance, was the rise of dairying.

The growing importance of milk production towards the end of the nineteenth century was of particular importance around the coast, where tourism generated a special demand, and close to railway stations for the export of cheese and butter to more distant markets. However by the turn of the century the butter trade had been dealt a savage blow by competition from overseas producers. In the 1860s some 70% of national milk production had been devoted to cheese and butter manufacture, but by the 1930s the proportion had slumped to 30% (109). Foreign

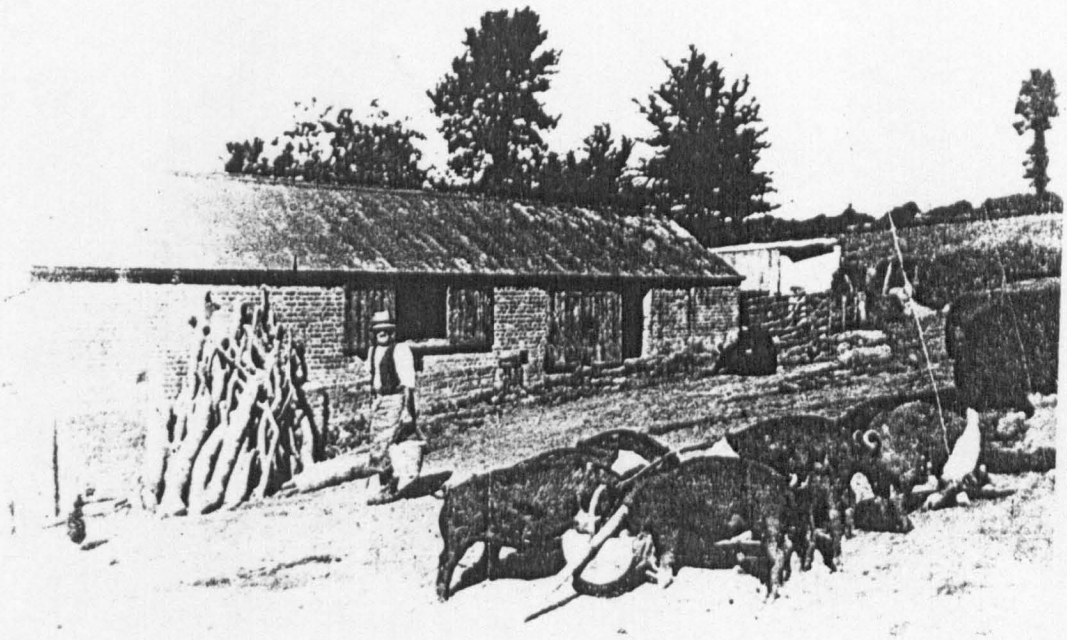
competition, opened up by improved methods of refridgeration and distribution, coupled with improvements in Britain's own internal transportation, encouraged a switch to liquid milk production. Demand for liquid milk increased dramatically in the twentieth century. For many farmers this laid the foundation for considerable success in the new liquid market. The growth of production in Cheshire, Hertfordshire and Somerset are cases in point. However in other areas the changes in the structure of the market brought problems. The market strength of the farmers in the more outlying areas was diminished. No longer could farmers depend on small local retailers for sales of butter and cheese. When the market was over-supplied prices tumbled and sometimes outlets disappeared altogether. The general upward trend in average milk prices masked considerable discrepancy between regions and even within the same locality (110).

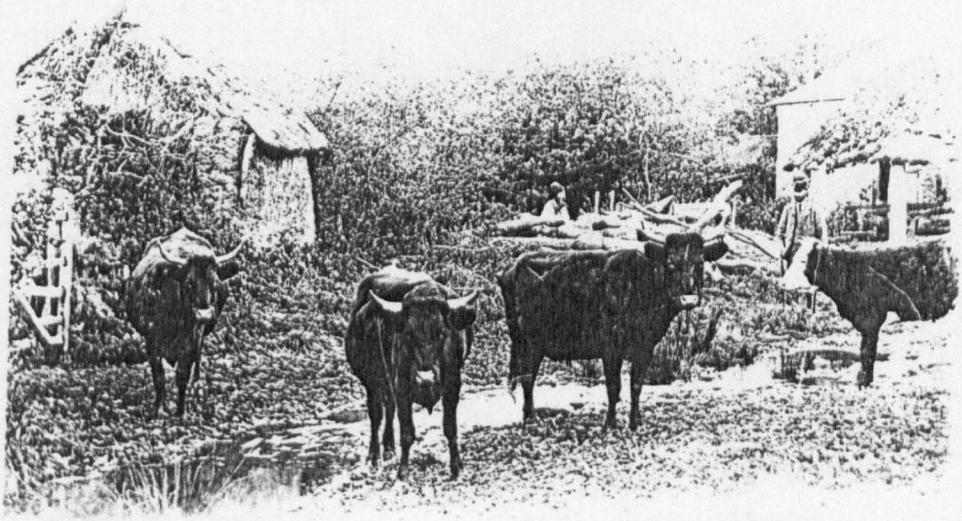
In the first two decades of the century in particular Devon suffered from some of these marketing problems. In terms of stocking levels (number of cows per acre of crops and grass) Devon was the twelfth most important dairying county in 1870 but the seventeenth in 1930. Its production in the 1926-1930 period was 124.7% of 1896-1900 production. In Cornwall the figure was 128.2%, in Somerset 131.5% and in Gloucestershire 167.9% (111). To some extent Devon was caught between two markets and failed to benefit fully from either. Unlike Somerset it was, until the 1930s, too distant from the main centres of population to fully cash in on the liquid market. On the other hand it did not have the magnitude of the tourist demand of Cornwall nor, arguably, the devotion to co-operative marketing of cream and butter shown by some of the Cornish producers (112).

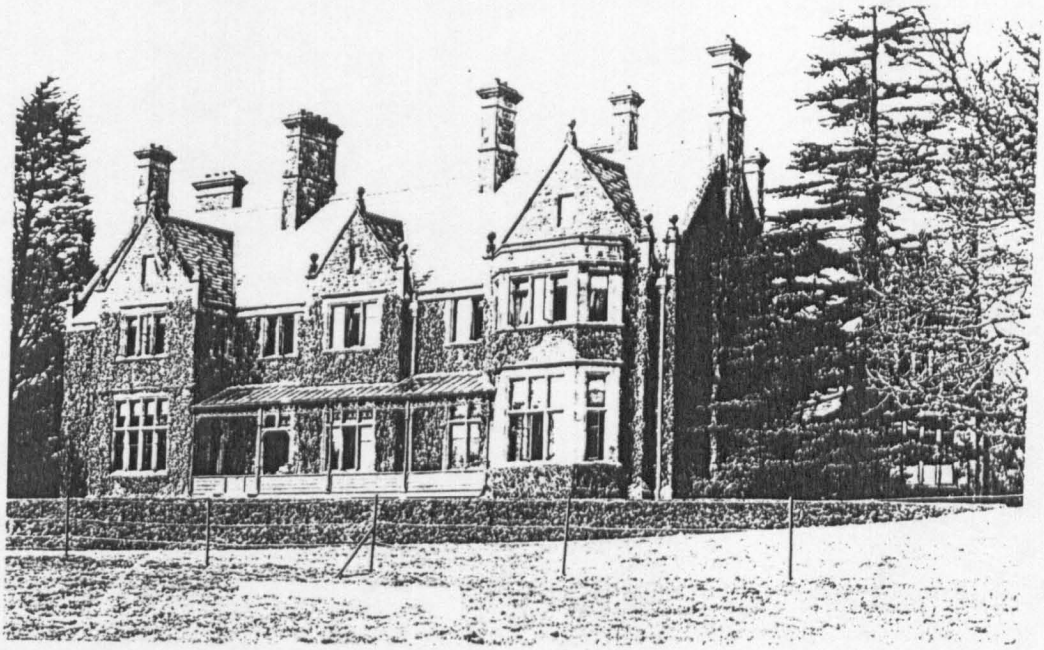


Threshing corn at Bradworthy circa 1920s.

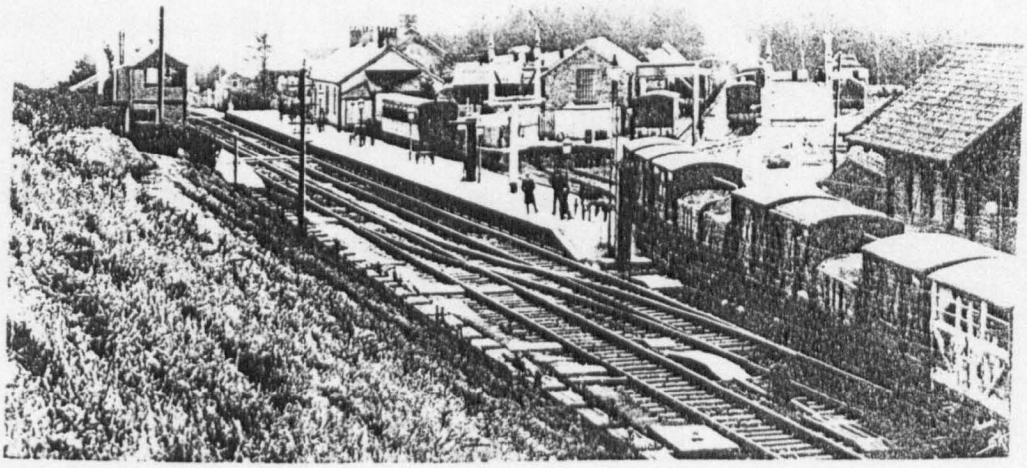
Overleaf farm yards - i. Pigs at Exbourne (10 miles outside survey area); Clearly a 'modern' farm - note the brick and hard roofed building.
ii. Madworthy Farm, Beaworthy - buildings of traditional thatch and cob (mud and straw building material).







Ashbury House - later demolished.
One of several large estates sold up between the wars.



HALWILL STATION.

Halwill Station, 1907 - a boost for local agricultural trade.

Bouquet has suggested that another reason for the delay in Devon farmers specialising in milk production, in contrast to their Cornish and Somerset counterparts, was the greater capital requirements for buildings in the harsher climate of north and west Devon. She observes, for example, that the cheap Hosier bale mobile milking parlour could not be used so readily in Devon (113). However she perhaps forgets how limited the use of the Hosier Bale was elsewhere - only 110 in Wiltshire and the surrounding area by 1930 (114).

The slow growth in liquid milk specialisation meant that the traditional "pannier" market trade in butter, cream, eggs and fruit continued, especially near the north Devon coast, well into the inter-war period (115). Writing of the 1920s an Exmoor farmer's autobiographical account gives the ethos of this trade very well:

> we had something to sell each week, butter, eggs and rabbits. One of our old farming neighbours, Mr George Thorne of East Yarde, used to say, "Boys, if you want to get on always have something to sell". (116)

At the end of the 1920s a new outlet for cream and butter was provided by the Torridge Vale Creamery. In addition after 1933 the Creamery collected liquid milk - the "salvation" of West Devon farming through dairying could begin. The new duties of the dairy were a direct consequence of the government's own attempts to re-order the milk market and to improve the quality of production. The Agricultural Marketing Acts of 1931 and 1933 enabled producers, represented by the NFU which was increasingly brought into corporatist relationships with government during this period, to establish marketing boards (117).

The Milk Marketing Board was established in 1933 and provided a

guaranteed outlet for all liquid milk. Between 1933-34 and 1938-39 liquid milk production in the Far Western Region (Devon and Cornwall) nearly doubled (118). At the outset of the new scheme sharp price differentials between regions existed. In June 1934 Devon producers could only achieve 67% of the price received for milk by producers in the South East (119). The Board set out to minimise these discrepancies. Thus between 1924-5 and 1954-5 sales of milk in the Far Western Region quadrupled from 30 to 120 million gallons, whereas the more modest increase in the South East was from 94 to 131 million gallons (120). Even in the period 1926-1932 Harwood Long showed the Holsworthy area to be the primary dairying region of the county (121), and clearly the increase after that time was even more significant. Nonetheless at the outset of the Second World War West Devon milk production remained essentially an adjunct, albeit a growing one, to the traditional stock rearing farming economy. All this was to change in the war period and after.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to sum up briefly the trends described in this chapter. The statistical changes should now be clear - fewer farm workers, more owner-occupation, the slow movement towards more intensive agricultural production especially of milk, and so forth. In some ways there are a number of seemingly contrary strands to all this. Specialised commodity production seems to have gone hand in hand with an increasingly familial and even quasi-subsistence orientation. The farmers' response to harsh economic conditions was to tighten the belt and look to new types of

production. The greater economic, social and cultural independence of West Devon farmers in the aftermath of the collapse of landlordism has to be put against the growing dependence of the farmers on the negotiating ability of their own political representatives and on the policies of government. The pace of commoditisation appears to have been forced along by new markets for milk and pigs, by the use of new inputs such as bought-in feedingstuffs, but at the same time it was limited by the decline in use of hired labour and dependence on family and communal patterns of labour use. This is not the point to attempt answers to these apparent contradictions, which will be dealt with more systematically in later chapters.

FOOTNOTES

1. Some of the material in this chapter was presented in a paper to the Rural Economy and Society Study Group Annual Conference, Oxford, 1985. An ammended and much condensed version of the paper, entitled 'The historical development of family farming in west Devon', is published in a volume of the edited papers: COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. Eds. (1986) Agriculture: People and Policies, London: George Allen and Unwin.

2. FRIEDMANN, H. (1978a) World market, state and family farm: social basis of household production in the era of wage labour, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 20 (4), pp.545-586; FRIEDMANN, H. (1978b) Simple commodity production and wage labour in the American Plains, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (1), pp.71-100.

3. The term specialised household producers is used by Friedmann essentially in a descriptive way. It lacks the theoretical status of the term simple commodity producer, although clearly the two are closely linked.

4. FRIEDMANN, H. (1978a) op. cit.

5. FLETCHER, T.W. (1960) The Great Depression of English agriculture 1873-96, Economic History Review, (2nd ser) 13 (3), pp.417-432; PERRY, P.J. (1974) British Farming in the Great Depression 1870-1914, Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

6. CARTER, I. (1979) Farm Life in Northeast Scotland, 1840-1914, Edinburgh: John Donald.

7. ibid. p.3.

8. MARSHALL, W. (1796) The Rural Economy of the West of England, London. Reprinted 1970, Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

9. MORGAN, F.W. (1940) Domesday geography of Devon, Transactions of the Devonshire Assosication, 72, pp.305-331. Quoted in BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) Agricultural Enterprise on the Red Loams and Culm Measures of Devon - An Analytical Survey, Exeter University Ph.D. Thesis. p.99.

10. MORGAN, F.W. (1940) op. cit. BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) op. cit.

11. CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) Devon's Agriculture, Unpublished paper prepared for Devon Victoria County History, Vol II, Env.440, Institute of Historical Research.

12. ibid.

13. FOX, H.S.A. (1975) The chronology of enclosure and economic development in medieval Devon, Economic History Review, 28 (2nd ser), 2, pp.181-197; HAVINDEN, M.A. (1969) Agricultural history in the South-West, Exeter Papers in Economic History, 2, pp.7-18.

14. See for example: Lane, C. (1980) The development of pastures and meadows during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Agricultural History Review, 28, pp.18-30.

15. FOX, H.S.A. (1973) Outfield cultivation in Devon and Cornwall: a reinterpretation, Exeter Papers in Economic History, 8, pp.19-38.

16. CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

17. BOUQUET, M. (1985) Family, Servants and Visitors: The Farm Household in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Devon, Norwich: Geo Books. See also DODGSON, R. and JEWELL, C.A. (1969) Paring and burning and related practices with particular reference to the south western counties of England, in GAILEY, A. and FENTON, A. Eds. The Spade in Northern Atlantic Europe, Belfast: Queen's University.

18. HOSKINS, W.G. and FINBERG, H.P.R. (1952) Devonshire Studies, London: Jonathan Cape. p.315.

19. HOSKINS, W.G. (1959) Devon and its People, Newton Abbot: David and Charles. p.32.

20. ibid. p.31.

21. HOSKINS, W.G. (1954) Devon, London: Collins. p.58.

22. ibid. pp.78-79; HOSKINS, W.G. and FINBERG, H.P.R. (1952) op. cit. p.59.

23. HOSKINS, W.G. (1954) op. cit. p.59.

24. MACPHERSON, C.B. (1964) The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke, London: Oxford University Press. p.113.

25. KEW, J. (1969) Regional variations in the Devon land market, 1536-1558, Exeter Papers in Economic History, 2, pp. 27-42.

26. ibid. pp.31-32.

27. DAHLMAN, C. (1980) The Open Field System and Beyond: A Property Rights Analysis of an Economic Institution, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

28. CLAY, C. (1981) Lifeleasehold in the western counties of England, 1650-1750, Agricultural History Review, 29 (11), pp.83-96; KERRIDGE, E. (1969) Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth century and After, London: George Allen and Unwin.

29. FINBERG, H.P.R. (1951) Tavistock Abbey. A Study in the Social and Economic History of Devon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; HOSKINS, W.G. (1938) The Ownership and Occupation of the Land in Devonshire, 1650-1800, London University Ph.D. Thesis.

30. HOSKINS, W.G. (1938) op. cit. p.78.

31. BRENNER, R. (1976) Agrarian class structure and economic development in pre-industrial Europe, Past and Present, 70, pp.30-75; BRENNER, R. (1982) The agrarian roots of European capitalism, Past and Present, 97, pp.16-113. See also ASHTON, T.H. and PHILPIN, C.H.E. (1985) The Brenner Debate, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

32. BRENNER, R. (1982) op. cit. pp.76-89. See also FOURQUIN, G. (1976) Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages, London: George Allen and Unwin.

33. BRENNER, R. (1982) op. cit. pp.83-84.

34. ibid. p.84.

35. In addition to Brenner's contributions and the debate surrounding them see also: HILTON, R. (1978) Ed The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, London: Verso; HOLTON, R.J. (1985) The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, London: Macmillan.

36. WILLIAMS, M. (1970) The Draining of the Somerset Levels, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

37. FINCH, G. (1984) The Experience of a Peripheral Region in the Age of Industrialisation: The Case of Devon 1840-1914, Oxford University D.Phil. Thesis. p.15.

38. Estimated in HOSKINS, W.G. (1938) op. cit.

39. ibid. p.96.

40. BRENNER, R. (1982) op. cit. p.91.

41. CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

42. MARSHALL, W. (1796) op. cit. Quoted in HAVINDEN, M.A. (1969) op. cit.

43. WILLIAMS, W.M. A West Country Village Ashworthy, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

44. These processes are described in some detail in FINCH, G. (1984) op. cit.

45. HAVINDEN, M.A. (1969) op. cit.

46. FULLER, T. (1662) Worthies of England. Quoted in CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit. The text was reprinted by George Allen and Unwin in 1952.

47. WESTCOTE, T. (1639) A View of Devonshire in MDCXXX, Reprinted 1845 Exeter: Roberts. Quoted in CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

48. CAMDEN, W. (1594) Britania, London: Bishop. Quoted in CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

49. MILLES, Dean. (c1755) Mss, Devonshire Mss, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

50. CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

51. MARSHALL, W. (1796) op. cit. pp.106-107. Quoted by CHAMBERS, J.D. and MINGAY, G.E. (1966) The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880 London: Batsford. p.37.

52. MARSHALL, W. (1796) op. cit. pp.135-136.

53. TANNER, H. (1848/9) The farming of Devonshire, Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 9.

54. ibid.

55. CAIRD, J. (1852) English Agriculture in 1850-51, Letter VII Devonshire, London: Longman. pp.48-56. p.48.

56. VANCOUVER, C. (1808) A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon, London. Reprinted 1969, Newton Abbot: David and Charles. p.107.

57. The evidence relevant to Devon is contained in LITTLE, W. (1881) Report on Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset, in Report of the Royal Commission into the Depression in Agriculture, Parliamentary Paper, XVI, (C.2778); LITTLE, W. (1882) Report on Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset, in Report of the Royal Commission into the Depression in Agriculture, Parliamentary Paper, XV, (C. 3375); REW, R.H. (1895) Report on North Devon, in Report of the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression, 1894-97, Parliamentary Paper, XVI, (C.7728).

58. REW, R.H. (1895) op. cit. p.15.

59. CURTLER, W.R. (c.1908) op. cit.

60. HAGGARD, Sir H. Rider. (1902) Rural England, London: Longmans.

61. ibid. p.208.

62. ibid. p.215.

63. REW, R.H. (1895) op. cit. p.19.

64. MINGAY, G.E. (1962) The size of farms in the eighteenth century, Economic History Review, (2nd ser) 14 (3), pp.469-488.

65. ibid.

66. FRIEDMANN, H. (1978a) op. cit. p.549.

67. This quasi-susbsistence was a combination of subsistence production of some commodities for consumption on the farm and a goal of family subsistence.

68. FINCH, G. (1984) op. cit.

69. For a notable exception where political concern was blended with careful empirical work see LEVY, H. (1911) Large and Small Holdings: A Study of English Agricultural Economics. Reprinted 1966, London: Frank Cass. On the political debate on farm size and on peasant proprietorship at this time see BECKETT, J.V. (1983) The debate over farm sizes in eighteenth and nineteenth century England, Agricultural History, 57 (3), pp.308-325; BRADLEY, M.E. (1983) Mill on proprietorship, productivity, and population: a theoretical reappraisal, History of Political Economy, 15 (3), pp.423-449; DEWEY, C.J. (1974) The rehabilitation of the peasant proprietor in nineteenth century economic thought, History of Political Economy, 6 (1), pp.17-47; MARTIN, D. (1981) John Stuart Mill and the Land Question, Hull: University of Hull Publications.

70. If indeed it can be said to have attained that status at all. At the level of popular discourse and farming ideology the notion of "family farming" is clearly now strong. At an official level the concern is usually somewhat oblique. For example the Northfield Report dealt with issues close to the 'family farm' question but did not address family farming directly as a policy issue. See Northfield (1979) Report of the Committe of Inquiry into the Acquisition and Occupancy of Agricultural Land London: HMSO (Cmnd 7599).

71. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) op. cit. Table 3.1 is derived from tables given on pp.21-22.

72. MINGAY, G.E. (1962) op. cit.

73. BRITTON, D.K. BURRELL, A.M. HILL, B. & RAY, D. (1980) Statistical Handbook of UK Agriculture, School of Rural Economics, Wye College.

74. See SAVILLE, J. (1957) Rural De-Population in England and Wales 1851-1951, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

75. MINGAY, G.E. (1962) op. cit.

76. HOUSE OF COMMONS (1852-53) Sessional Papers, LXXXVIII, pt 1, lxxviii. Quoted in KUSSMAUL, A. (1981) Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.9. Kussmaul provides a fascinating account of the role of servants in agriculture: "Servants in husbadry were creatures of the early modern economy; the institution of service was imbedded in a matrix of agricultural practices and social organisation. They were agents in the growth in size of farms and in a revolution in agricultural practices at a time when the supply of full-time adult labourers was unreliable, and were victims of the growth they helped procure." p.120. See also SNELL, K.D.M. (1985) Annals of the Labouring Poor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

77. ibid.

78. BOUQUET, M. (1985) op. cit.

79. ibid. p.79.

80. See in particular CHARLESWORTH, A. (1980) The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest, 1700-1850: a comment, Journal of Peasant Studies, 8 (1), pp.101-111; DUNBABIN, J.P.D. (1963) The 'Revolt of the Field': The agricultural labourers' movement in the 1870s, Past and Present, 26, pp.68-97; DUNBABIN, J.P.D. (1968) The incidence and organisation of agricultural trade unionism in the 1870s, Agricultural History Review, 16, pp.114-141; HOBSBAWM, E. and RUDE, G. (1969) Captain Swing, London: Lawrence and Wishart; HOWKINS, A. (1977) Structural conflict and the farm-worker: Norfolk 1900-1920, Journal of Peasant Studies, 4 (3), pp.217-229; SNELL, K.D.M. (1985) op. cit; WELLS, R.A.E. (1979) The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest, 1700-1850: a comment, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (2) pp.115-139.

81. JOHNSON, A.H. (1909) The Disappearance of the Small Landowner. Reprinted 1963, Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also BECKETT, J.V. (1984) The pattern of landownership in England and Wales, 1660-1880, Economic History Review, (2nd ser) 37 (1), pp.1-22.

82. See BATEMAN, J. (1883) The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland, London.

83. HOSKINS, W. (1938) op. cit.

84. Table 3.8 is derived from figures give in BATEMAN, J. (1883) op. cit. HOSKINS, W. (1938) op. cit. p.198. and THOMPSON, F.M.L. (1973) English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p.117. The three sets of figures are not entirely compatible but the discrepancies are not sufficient to warrant concern.

85. Derived from THOMPSON, F.M.L. (1973) op. cit. p.117.

86. ibid. and CLAPHAM, J.H. (1952) An Economic History of Modern Britain, Books III & IV, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.260-261.

87. THOMPSON, F.M.L. (1973) op. cit. p.116.

88. RUBINSTEIN, W.D. (1981) New men of wealth and the purchase of land in nineteenth century England, Past and Present, 92, pp.125-147.

89. Source: HOUSE OF COMMONS (1874) Parliamentary Paper LXXII, (C1097).

90. Some of the landowning familes which eventually 'descended' to medium scale family farming were not so small. The Luxton family near Winkleigh in north Devon owned 2,000 acres in the nineteenth century, their descendants eventually farming just 200 acres: CORNWELL. J. (1982) Earth to Earth, London: Allen Lane.

91. REW, R.H. (1895) op. cit.

92. CLAPHAM, J.H. (1952) op. cit. PERRY, P.J. (1972) Where was the 'Great Agricultural Depression'? a geography of agricultural bankruptcy in late Victorian England and Wales, Agricultural History Review, 20 (1), pp.30-45. For a general account of the Depression period see ORWIN,

C.S. and WHETHAM, E.H. (1964) History of British Agriculture 1846-1914, London: Longmans; PERRY, P.J. ed. (1973) British Agriculture, 1875-1914, London: Methuen.

93. CLAPHAM, J.H. (1952) op. cit. vol IV. p.88.

94. The best account for the nineteenth century is THOMPSON, F.M.L. (1973) op. cit. See also DOUGLAS, R. (1976) Land, People and Politics: A History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom 1878-1952, London: Allison and Busby.

95. THOMPSON, F.M.L. (1973) op. cit. p.279.

96. ibid. p.279.

97. MARTIN, E.W. (1965) The Shearers and the Shorn: A Study of Life in a Devon Community, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p.76.

98. ANDREWS, J.H.B. (1964) The rise of the Bible Christians and the state of the church in north Devon in the early nineteenth century, Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 96, pp.147-185. Quoting from NIEBUHR, H.R. (1929) The Social Sources of Denominationalism, Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press. The Bible Christian Church was founded in 1815 as a result of a dispute between the founder, a Cornishman, William O'Bryan and the Wesleyan Methodists. The denomination found a particularly ready foothold in rural West Devon and Cornwall. It lasted until 1907 when union with some other small groups led to the United Methodist Church. The United Methodists joined with the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists in 1932 to form the present Methodist church. While retaining the Arminianism of Wesleyan Methodism the Bible Christians were more charismatic in their worship and more suspicious of Anglican liturgyhm. The church essentially formed part of an oppositional culture based on strong communal and kin loyalties. On Methodism in Devon and the origins of the Bible Christians see BOURNE, F.W. (1905) The Bible Christians: Their Origins and History, 1815-1900, London: Bible Christian Book Room; BROCKETT, A.A. (1958) Nonconformity in Devon in the eighteenth century, Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 90, pp.31-59; HAYMAN, J.G. (1898) A History of the Methodist Revival of the Last century in its Relations to North Devon from the first visit of the Wesleys in the Centenary Year in 1839, with supplementary notes extending the history to 1898, London: Wesleyan Book Room; SHAW, T. (1965) The Bible Christians 1815-1907, London: Epworth Press; THORNE, R. (1975) The last Bible Christians: their church in Devon in 1907, Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 107, pp.47-75. For sociological accounts of Methodism elsewhere see CLARK, D. (1982) Between Pulpit and Pew: Folk Religion in a North Yorkshire Fishing Village, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; HORNER, J.P. (1971) The Influence of Methodism on the Social Structure and Culture of Rural Northumberland from 1820-1914, M.A. Thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; MOORE, R. (1974) Pit-men, Preachers and Politics, London: Cambridge University Press; OBELKEVICH, J. (1976) Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875, Oxford: Clarendon Press; PROBERT, J.C.C. (1971) The Sociology of Cornish Methodism, Cornish Methodist Historical Association.

99. These figures are derived from a privately published account by a former minister of the Northlew Methodist Circuit leant to me by a Methodist farmer in the survey area: PARSONS, R.K. (1972) Souls for Your Hire: A History of the Northlew Circuit of the Methodist Church from 1811 to 1932.

100. The description is that of VIDLER, A.R. The Church in the Age of Revolution, 1789 to the Present Day, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971. p.41.

101. For a full account of the history, development and eventual unification of all branches of Methodism see CURRIE, R. (1968) Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber.

102. REW, R.H. (1895) op. cit.

103. STURMEY, S.G. (1955) Owner-farming in England and Wales, 1900 to 1950, Manchester School, 23, pp.246-268.

104. ibid.

105. ibid.

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Chapter 4

FAMILY FARMING IN WEST DEVON AFTER 1939.

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter portrayed in some detail the rise of commercial family farming in West Devon up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Particular emphasis was placed upon changes in the composition of the farm labour force, changes in tenure and in the commodity basis of agricultural production. These processes of adaptation were well advanced by 1939 and the subsequent period witnessed a continuing decline in both the use of hired labour and the magnitude of the tenanted sector of agricultural land. The decline of traditional stock-rearing (as opposed to fattening) agriculture also continued. There, however, the resemblance largely ceases for the period from 1939 right through to the time of writing has been one of unprecedented growth and expansion of UK agriculture. Minor irritants have punctuated this trend and have been made much of by the farming lobby - in addition there is evidence that some sectors of the farming community have benefitted less than others - but such irritants pale into insignificance when put alongside the severity of periodic agricultural recessions of the previous century. The aim of this chapter therefore is to see how family farming fared in this new regime of economic expansion and technological innovation, an era which a number of commentators have termed a "second agricultural revolution" (1).

A major theme of this chapter is the increased role played by the state in the formulation of agricultural policies, policies which now provide the framework within which the reproduction of family farming takes place. In the preceeding chapter it was possible to describe the changes in agricultural production and its social organisation against the

backcloth of relative state inactivity. Indeed the government refused to intervene in any sustained manner in the agricultural commodity market either during the Great Depression at the end of the nineteenth century or in the 1930s. Depression had been the aspect of the state's role most frequently commented upon. It is, of course, a fallacy to assume complete state inactivity during the period, for the government performed a number of functions in supporting agriculture in a more general sense. And in the realm of landlord-tenant relations the government's role was of paramount importance.

However it is broadly true to say that the dictates of the world market, the requirements of rapid industrialisation and the vagaries of the weather provided the broad context in which local agricultural change occurred up to the middle of the twentieth century. Subsequently the world market has been distorted on a grand scale and even the vagaries of the weather are now to some extent mollified by new developments in production technology many of which have benefitted from government supported research and grant induced agricultural investment. An outline of the main changes in state policy is provided in this chapter but the main aim is to integrate the discussion of policy developments into the body of material on agricultural change in the post 1939 period. The survey begins with the changes consequent upon the outbreak of war in 1939.

DEVON FARMING IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The immediate impact of the 1939-45 War was another food production

campaign which started in 1940. There was none of the delay which characterised the 1914-18 War. The Government dispensed with the services of the county council agricultural committees, which had been quietly working to implement agricultural policies in the counties since the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act of 1919, and instead set up its own committees under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry. The council committees continued to exist but their role remained limited to the educational and general administrative matters which had occupied them throughout the inter-war period (2). The new committees made use of farmers involved in the county council committees but they did not rely on them exclusively. Thus in Devon a serving member of the county council committee, rather than its current chairman, was asked to chair the new County War Agricultural Executive Committee (CWAEC).

The one aim of the CWAECs was to increase food production and they ushered in a new era of state direction of agriculture hitherto unprecedented in British history. The CWAECs had sweeping powers to inspect farms, make appropriate stocking and cropping recommendations, and, in the event of these being ignored, had the powers to impose supervision orders or even notices to quit. The "War Ags" as they became known brought the aims of the state to the level of the working farm and established a mode of policy implementation which continued, in the MAFF advisory service, long after the committees themselves had shed most of their powers. It had become very clear by the end of the War that farmers' continuing prosperity was linked inexorably to state initiatives and policy. It was, of course, a shrewd move by government to make the implementation of strong central state direction so dependent on committees composed chiefly of farmers operating at county

and district level. In addition the full-time officers of the committees were often drawn from the existing staff of the county council committees and so were likely to be well known to committee members. The apparent self-regulation was not entirely illusory but the dictates of central government certainly had a primary importance (3).

One of the first tasks undertaken by the new CWAEC in Devon was to survey the agricultural conditions of the county. The results were not encouraging. The committee estimated that the level of pre-war production was less than 50% of that which the land could produce (4). Neither the capital resources nor the manpower necessary for increasing production immediately appeared to be available for the task, although nationally the Ministry of Agriculture had been preparing for war for some two years and had, for example, already assembled an impressive stock pile of tractors and farm implements (5). The county's position was summed up graphically by the CWAEC chairman Hayter Hames:

> In the ten years before the War the number of men on the land had fallen one-third: 10,000 men had left the industry. ... Some of the implements on the farm were old in the last war and in those parishes that had turned to dairying and where the land had gone to grass, there were very few arable implements left. .... The farmers themselves, though they had felt the agricultural depression perhaps less than farmers in the Eastern counties, had been for a long time overworked and underpaid and they were not in the best spirits to launch forth on a gigantic War effort. (6)

Nonetheless the response to government propoganda, War Ag goading and perhaps most significantly price incentives and the farmers' own memories of the 1914-18 war was impressive. In fact in the first months of War the instructions from government were somewhat confused and most farmers rightly accepted the plea to increase arable cropping and ignored the contradictory and rather curious advice, which was not

subsequently repeated, to increase sheep production (7). The initial impact on Devon's agriculture was dramatic. The lessons of the 1914-18 War were not forgotten. A switch from livestock production, with the partial exception of dairying, to production of cereals and vegetables was the best way of ensuring that an adequate national diet was maintained. By the same token constant supplies required control of prices, so bringing a new measure of involvement between farmers and officials. The 1940 plough up campaign resulted in an immediate increase of 50% in the county's tillage area (8). By 1943 11% of the county, much of it in West Devon, had been reclaimed from waste or rough pasture and the arable acreage of the county had doubled (9). The potato acreage increased fivefold and the number of tractors threefold (10). Blunden describes an average 80-100 acre farm on the Culm Measures before the war as comprising of 6-8 North Devon cows with followers for beef production with small sales of milk in the summer; 30-40 ewes; a few pigs and/or poultry; and a few acres of oats and roots. This mixed livestock system was changed in the War to a milk and arable system (11). A semi-peasant polyculture was transformed into a system of specialised commodity production.

Apart from the increased productivity, and hence prosperity, attendant on the food production campaign the organisation of the campaign brought a number of new experiences to farmers whose individualism was challenged under the new regime. Almost overnight farmers were removed from the 'anarchy' of the free market to the rigours of state direction. In many ways the significance of this was as great on the input side as with the controlled market for produce. For example feeding stuffs were rationed. Not only did this force farmers to take seriously the advice

of 'experts' on feeding livestock, but it also meant that all livestock farmers were brought into the regular advisory network:

> The monthly distribution of coupons to 20,000 farmers and smallholders has provided a ready means of sending leaflets, advice and instructions to every holding. (12)

The CWAEC also had a major role in supplying machinery and labour. In both instances farmers found themselves involved in formalised and 'rational' economic and social relationships which were different to some of the communal and reciprocal practices of earlier years. The Devon CWAEC encouraged contracting and in addition directly organised the hire of machines from 100 farm depots throughout the county. These experiences can be seen as the direct precursor to the use of farm contractors in the post 1945 period. Hayter Hames remarked specifically on the growth of war-time contractors: "today there is very nearly one Contractor to every parish" (13).

That these changes were significant can be adduced from the initial reluctance of many farmers to depart from past practices. Thus in the first winter of the War when the Ministry expected a short-fall in the labour needed for the plough-up campaign to be made good by the newly established Women's Land Army, the farmers in fact largely ignored the new source of labour and made use of local unemployed or under-employed workers (14). But this luxury was not to last and farmers found themselves increasingly drawn into the state and local CWAEC net. In all these changes a process of 'professionalisation', to coin a term used by Grignon, can be observed (15). Grignon's notion of professionalisation implies more than just an increasing specialisation and technical expertise. He also highlights the increasingly 'closed' nature of

farming due partly to the capital costs involved in setting up in agriculture.

The control of the commodity market also had an impact beyond the obvious one of stabilising and increasing the prices farmers' received for their goods. For example the traditional pannier market trade in butter, cream and eggs was banned (16). This trade conducted by farmers' wives suddenly ceased to be a crucial part of farmers' marketing strategies. This kind of dairy selling was never recovered after the War. Some lost the art, others the inclination for such ardous work and more importantly the MMB established itself as the major marketing outlet. Eggs and table poultry did however provide an outlet for a number of years after the War.

THE SECOND AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION: THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

In the case of agriculture it is, of course, a mistake to see the official end of hostilities as heralding an end of either war-time controls or the urgency for increased food production. In 1945 world food trade was in a shambles and it remained that way for most of 1946 and 1947. Indeed some of the most acute food shortages of the war period occurred in 1947 as a consequence of very poor weather. Thus the Agriculture Act passed in 1947 to secure the future prosperity and government support of the agricultral industry was premised on many war-time concerns over securing adequate food supplies through a largely state directed industry. It is in some ways ironic that a piece of legislation which set out to provide the framework, which indeed it did,

for a new era of partnership between agriculture and government should have been passed in such unusual agricultural conditions.

The Act was designed to provide a secure market for agricultural products, to assist agriculture's own adjustments to changing markets and production demands, and above all to provide for the nation and farmers alike a productive and expansionist agriculture. Government wanted secure food supplies, farmers a secure income, and so the idea of 'partnership' first conceived of by the Selborne Committee during the First World War came to fruition (17). An expansionist agriculture was to be based on a system of guaranteed prices for all major agricultural products. Furthermore the Act detailed the means by which prices were to be arrived at through the "Annual Review and Determination of Guarantees", at which the National Farmers' Union was to be consulted. The powers of the CWAECs were largely to be continued by the newly constituted County Agricultural Executive Committees.

The annual price review remained a highlight of the farming year certainly until 1972, although its significance diminished somewhat after the passage of the 1957 Agriculture Act (18). Devon's agriculture benefitted, in line with other counties, from the support resulting from the 1947 Act. It also gained from a number of other measures. The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1949 reaffirmed the centrality of marketing boards, especially the MMB, in the post-war framework. The 1951 Livestock Rearing Act extended the hill subsidy and grant system set out under the 1946 Hill Farming Act to "livestock rearing land". However the provisions of this measure were limited to land not deemed suitable for dairy production, so only the more marginal land within

even an area such as West Devon could be included within the scheme.

1952 saw legislation providing for fertiliser subsidies, ploughing grants and beef calf subsidies. This series of measures demonstrated the government's increasing awareness that certain sectors of agriculture were particularly in need of special treatment as a means to encouraging the improvement of agriculture's own efficiency as well as merely providing price support. However such a selective programme inevitably provoked dissent in some sections of the farming community, particularly amongst the milk and cereals activists of the NFU. Their constant appeals for like treatment prevented the furtherance of selectivity which the government wished for. Thus the special hill and livestock rearing schemes were given at best a luke warm reception and they did little to prevent the frequent criticism of government policy in Devon especially through the 1960s.

The Conservative Government which took office in 1951 did much to bring agriculture out of the system of post-war controls. In particular fixed pricing and controlled markets were ended. Instead deficiency payments were introduced whereby farmers marketed their own produce but were paid the difference if prices sunk below a guaranteed level. This meant that the direct cost of agricultural support to the exchequer became very apparent and attempts to limit this were inevitable. Thus the 1957 Agriculture Act marked the end of the full-blooded expansion of the immediate post-war period. The government's support for agriculture, enshrined in the 1947 Act, was to continue but henceforth the costs were to be considered more carefully and the emphasis was to be on improved agricultural efficiency rather than an ever increasing volume of

production per se. Much of the Act was concerned with refining the arithmetic procedures to be utilised at the Annual Review. Under pressure from the farming lobby limits were set on the permitted reduction of the total value of the Price review in any one year - not more than 2.5%, and on the variation in single commodity prices - a 4% limit. But the Act also reflected a victory for the government, for henceforth the award to agriculture was to formally reflect the assumption that the industry would absorb increased production costs of £25 million each year through increased efficiency (19).

In order to assist the improvement of efficiency the capital grants already available in upland and marginal areas were extended to all areas, the advisory service was strengthened, and the Small Farmers' Scheme was born. This scheme provided extra capital grant assistance to farms, judged to be economically viable, of between 20 and 100 acres in size. Although criticisms have been made that the scheme was abused and helped only half of the farmers it was intended to serve and often incoming rather than local farmers (20) it is also clear that small farm areas, for example Wales (21), did benefit. In the sample interviewed for this survey no less than 42% had participated in the scheme. As the scheme itself ceased in 1973 and, of course, a number of the farmers interviewed would not have been eligible for the scheme this figure represents an impressively high proportion. The new building and machines, drainage and reclamation schemes dating from this period all bear witness to its impact.

From the early 1960s agricultural policy entered another phase of increased agricultural protection in the face of growing world food

surpluses. The period has been described graphically by Wilson:

> In 1963, the British Government almost unoticed, breached one of the basic principles of British trading policy since the repeal of the Corn Laws - that there should be an open door for imports of cheap foodstuffs, particularly from the Dominions. The sharp rise in costs (of agricultural support) convinced policy makers that deficiency payments and an 'open door' for imports could not co-exist in an era of large surpluses on world commodity markets. (22)

The breach of laissez-faire trading was provided by the introduction of Minimum Import Prices, the aim being the rather bizarre one of paying foreign suppliers higher prices than the world market justified in order to maintain British farm prices and avoid restricting imports as such, action which might have provoked retalitation against British exports.

Perhaps the main reason for the limited impact such a change of policy had at this time was the negotiations on possible entry into the EEC in the early 1960s, overtures subsequently rejected by de Gaulle in 1963. The proposals were far from welcome to the NFU, which adopted what Beresford has termed a Maginot mentality:

> Seen from Europe, or indeed from almost any vantage point, the Union's attitude towards the Common Market was the attitude of a spoilt only child of rich parents faced with an invasion of distant cousins. Apprehension fed on the mistaken notion that the invaders were all bigger and stronger than he was; mistrust fed on the fear that the happy home would be broken up and the cosy family atmosphere destroyed. (23)

Reaction was particularly strong in the remoter pastoral west, in Wales and in Devon where an abortive attempt to break away from the NFU, described by Beresford as a "Poujadist movement", was led by Wallace Day (24). Most of the 1960s was characterised by fierce criticisms of government policy from within the farming community, althought in fact net farming income more than kept pace with the rise in the cost of living (25).

Towards the end of the 1960s the spectre of entry into the EEC again began to loom, and by 1973 policy had largely shifted to take this into account. In theory there is a common system of pricing throughout the EEC, based on seperate price regimes for each of the main commodities (26). These are decided annually by the Council of Ministers. Such a major switch in the location of policy decisions naturally caused the NFU some initial concern, and much effort was generated in establishing the NFU's formidable lobbying machinery in Europe. This was effective - indeed in some ways they moved too fast and in recent years a retrenchment and re-establishing of important links at home has occurred - but for small Devon farmers it seemed to take the centre of power even further away than before.

In the same way that actual policy decisions may seem remote the methods of supporting agriculture used under the CAP are not so immediately obvious to the farmer as under the old regime. No longer, except in a few instances such as hill cow premiums, lamb premiums and when grain is bought directly into intervention, do farmers receive direct subsidy payments. Most of the support is 'invisible', a consequence of the import restrictions maintained by variable levies charged on imports. Capital grants have also figured in the programme, especially in the hill areas designated as Less Favoured Areas. The 'invisibility' of many of the new agricultural support measures of the CAP explains the reaction of many farmers interviewed to questioning on this topic. "What agricultural policy - there isn't one!" was a common response. Support for capital projects, such as the construction of buildings, drainage schemes and so forth, has been more visible. 70% of farmers interviewed had received capital grants for undertakings of this sort.

THE SECOND AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION ON THE GROUND

At the farm level these policies and general trends add up to a number of broad changes during the period, particularly in the pattern of farming and the increasing specialisation and commoditisation of production. At the end of the War there was some reversion to a more mixed pattern of farming again with sheep and beef production assuming some ascendancy over arable cropping which was based on war-time necessity rather than the suitability of the soils. Thus Devon's arable acreage declined from 596,400 acres in 1944 to 547,000 in 1949, but this was still 132% of the 1939 level (27). There was an increase in the acreage of permanent grass after the War, but its level in 1949 was only 83% of that in 1939 (28). By 1949 the number of pigs in Devon was still only 44% of the pre-war level and sheep 76% (29). But pig production, along with poultry production, increased dramatically in the 1950s. The number of tractors in the county continued to grow at a quite dramatic rate, from 3,053 in 1942 to 12,173 in 1950 (30). By the same token farm horses declined in number - from 15.5 per 1,000 acres of crops and grass in 1949 to only 3.5 per 1,000 acres in 1957 (31).

Milk production remained important and the stock-rearing farm selling surplus milk became less and less numerous and had virtually disappeared by the 1960s. It look longer for milk production to become confined as the specialism of a smaller number of farms that it has become today, although the number of milk producers began to decline from the early 1950s. Between 1950 and 1956 the number of registered milk producers in

England and Wales fell from 161,937 to 138,110, a trend that continued apace after 1960. Between 1960 and 1965 the number of registered producers in England and Wales declined from 123,137 to 100,449. By 1979 the figure was down to 46,972 and by 1984 to 39,287 (32). In Devon the fall was of a similar order, from 9,800 registered producers in 1956 to 4,030 in 1979. More characteristic of the 1940s and early 1950s was the expansion of milk production alongside other commodities on most farms. Thus in a survey of farms in seven parishes in the Holsworthy area, carried out in 1953, 86.3% of farms had some milk sales but few were solely or even chiefly dependent on milk production (33). Only 10.6% of the milk-selling farms derived 70% or more of output from the dairy enterprise and 59.5% derived under 50% of output from dairying.

Throughout the 1950s West Devon farming benefitted from an increase in the importation of cheap concentrate feeds from North America. This helped milk and beef, poultry and pig production and also gave rise to a decline in the traditional fodder crops and cereals. Government efforts to encourage the cultivation of oats in livestock areas to bring about savings on imports, for example, were singularly unsuccessful. But there was more to this than just cheap alternative supplies for this was also a period of rapid labour loss from the land. Reducing cereal and fodder crop production provided one means to save labour especially when lorries delivered the feeding stuffs to the door (34). While farming fortunes had revived farming was still not the high status occupation which it was to become in the 1970s. The drift from the land continued in most West Devon parishes, especially of young people, up until the 1960s or even 1970s. This occurred alongside a continuing general rural de-population which began to be reversed in most parishes in the 1970s.

The number of hired workers and very small farmers has continued to decline but a number of those spoken to during the research remarked on the greater willingness in the last few years for farmers' sons on the medium size farms to remain in agriculture.

It is salutory to note, from the vantage point of the 1980s, when the services available to rural areas have been so greatly improved, that the vast majority of farms in West Devon at the outset of the 1950s had neither mains water nor an electricity supply. Using data for the seven parishes from the 1949 National Farm Survey the Exeter study recorded that 91.8% of farms were supplied by well or spring water and 80.8% of farms had no electricity. The changes in this situation induced by government policy in the 1950s to provide these services to all rural areas was clearly one reason for the eventual stem in the tide of rural de-population. Nonetheless the government did little directly to ease the population decline. Indeed as late as 1965 the Labour's National Plan offered farmers a new support deal with one of the conditions being a release of scarce manpower at a rate of 25,000 a year (35).

The explanation for the decline in the number of milk producers from the early 1950s is not entirely straightforward. Blunden suggests a reduction in dairy profitability relative to beef and sheep production, especially after the Price Review of 1956 (36). However this seems to be a mistaken analysis for figures from the Farm Management Survey in South-west England for the 1950s and 1960s show the income gap between dairy and livestock agriculture slightly widening in the late 1950s (37). In the late 1960s, in spite of continued worries about over-production in the dairy sector, production increased. A study of a

sample of farms in East Devon and Dorset showed a real increase in dairy net farm income per farm from a base of 100 in 1967/8 to 152 in 1976/77 (38). Probably of greater importance in reducing the number of producers was the increased level of regulation of production methods (39). A scheme to eradicate tuberculosis, the "Tuberculosis (Attested herds) Scheme" necessitated capital outlay in strengthening fences and hedges, improving building and in the sale of diseased cows. It should be said that the initial expenses once borne were amply returned in the bonuses offered for "TT milk", 4d per gallon in 1949, and in greater profitability due to healthier and longer-living cows (40). Other additional costs had to be borne by those required to carry out improvements to buildings in order to receive new licenses to sell milk to the Board. With these costs to bear it was inevitable that those who stayed in production should expand and specialise in order to pay for the new investments. Although the costs of such investments undoubtdly led to higher returns in the long run they could be off-putting especially to older and smaller farmers. The new levels of specialisation required more intensive farming and clearly this path to commoditisation was resisted by some producers.

That many chose to stay in dairying and invest wholeheartedly in expanding production is well known - the standards of dairy production rose dramatically in the years after the War - but in the Holsworthy area where proportionately dairy farmers were the most numerous in Devon, 'modernisation' was the slowest. Certainly in the first decade after the War many more traditional farmers remained in milk production. In the attempts to eliminate tuberculosis in dairy cattle, cows were regularly tested and if free of the disease for a specified number of

years such producers became "accredited". In 1953 these "designated" producers, as the two types of producer (accredited and undergoing regular testing) were collectively known, made up 50% of producers in the Honiton MMB district of Devon and 31% in the Exeter district but only 11.6% (the lowest in Devon) in the Holsworthy district and a staggering 4.6% in the seven parishes of the Exeter Survey. This speaks plainly of the way in which dairying emerged from within a traditional stock-rearing agriculture in West Devon. Another striking feature of dairy production in the Holsworthy area in 1953 was the small proportion of farms with milking machines - only 20.8% of milk-selling farms. Table 4.1 shows the relatively low level of machinery use especially among the smaller farms, with a significant minority of the farmers still without a tractor. Correspondingly the survey found a relatively wide usage of farm horses. The Exeter survey recorded 1.3 farm horses per 100 acres of crops and grass.

The regular monthly milk cheque and higher returns from milk attracted many small producers in the Holsworthy area - for many milk production was the only way to stay in business - but few had the facilities to specialise to the degree favoured by farmers in the more prosperous parts of the country. This is not to suggest that the small farmers were necessarily inefficient producers. Rather there were many more small farmers in West Devon than elsewhere in the county and their options were more limited. Thus in the 7 parishes in 1953 no less than 57.5% of milk production and 66.7% of milk-selling farms was accounted for by farms of less than 100 acres in size. Milk yields on the smallest farms, 25-49.75 acres, were significantly higher than in all other size bands, although the figures have to be treated with some caution as they make

no allowance for beef cows on dairy farms. It is possible that the smaller farms might have devoted a smaller proportion of milk production to calf rearing than larger farms.

However, even while dairying and small farming remained almost synonomous the seeds of change could be perceived in the data on output. For the 7 parishes the Exeter Survey shows that the growth of milk production in the period 1948/9 to 1953/4 was faster on the larger farms and that while the total milk production of the smallest farms increased during the period its proportionate significance began to decline (See Table 4.2). The decline of mixed farming systems and an increased degree of on-farm specialisation of production has been characteristic of all sizes of farm in post-war Britain. Small farms, notwithstanding the fact that they have often been seen as 'traditional', have actually specialised faster than larger farms, an indication of the more pressing need for economies of scale than on larger farms, where the advantages of joint economies may still hold some sway. Britton has shown that the number of enterprises per farm declined in England and Wales by 10.4% between 1968 and 1974, the figure being 13.5% for small farms of between 275 and 599 smds (41).

These trends are intricately linked to the growth of owner-occupation, and associated mortgage indebtedness, and general indebtedness on trading as a result of the cost-price squeeze. A survey of farms in the south-west between 1949/50 and 1958/59 concluded that:

> Privately negotiated loans and mortgages became of increasing importance from 1955/56 onwards, a trend which coincided with the rising investment in land and property (42).

The increase was dramatic - south-western farmers owed three and a half

times more money to creditors in 1958/9 as in 1949/50. While family loans had remained more or less constant indebtedness to banks had increased more than fivefold. The proportion of farmers with overdrafts rose from 25% to 42% (43). The trend continued during the following decade. Whereas net farm income increased by 35% between 1958/59 and 1967/68, gross output was up by 42%, costs by 45% and total long and medium-term loans by 122% (44). The break-down of the figures by tenure type is even more revealing for it shows that the borrowing of farms which were owner-occupied at the outset of the period remained virtually constant. Tenants' borrowing rose consistently but the most dramatic increase, affecting thirteen of the sixty farms surveyed by Davies et al, was amongst farms which had had a transfer of tenure during the period (45). The 1950s and 1960s saw a considerable volume of sales of tenanted land to occupiers and this accounted for a significant proportion of the increase in borrowing during the period. The commoditisation of land is therefore seen as a critical element in promoting greater integration with wider circuits of capital and the need for intensification and specialisation of production in order to service loans.

Table 4.1 Milk-selling Farms Possessing Various Items of Machinery, 7 Parishes, 1953.

Size Group (acres)	No of Farms	Tractors	Milking Machine	Baler	Combine Harvester
25-49.75	52	33 (63.5%)	6 (11.5%)	2 (3.8%)	3 (5.8%)
50-99.75	83	60 (72.3%)	16 (19.3%)	5 (6.0%)	8 (9.6%)
100-149.75	37	30 (81.1%)	10 (21.0%)	1 (2.7%)	9 (24.3%)
150-299.75	26	26 (100%)	9 (34.6%)	2 (7.7%)	7 (26.9%)
300+	4	4 (100%)	1 (25.0%)	-	-
Total	202	153 (75.7%)	42 (20.8%)	10 (5.0%)	27 (13.4%)

Table 4.2 Milk Production by Size Group 1948/9 to 1953/54, 7 Parishes.

Col 1 = Index of Production, 1948/9 = 100.
Col 2 = Percentage of Total Production in each Year.

Size Group:-	25-49.75		50-99.75		100-149.75		150-299.75		300+		All Farms	
No of Farms:-	66		88		40		35		4		233	
	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.	1.	2.
1948/49	100	21.0	100	39.1	100	18.2	100	20.3	100	1.4	100	100.0
1949/50	101	20.3	99	36.8	112	19.5	112	21.7	124	1.7	105	100.0
1950/51	95	20.3	91	36.0	100	18.6	109	22.4	186	2.7	98	100.0
1951/52	98	20.1	93	.5.4	102	18.2	110	21.9	318	4.4	102	100.0
1952/53	107	19.3	110	36.7	116	18.2	129	22.5	279	3.3	117	100.0
1953/54	117	19.7	118	36.7	123	17.8	136	22.5	323	3.7	125	100.0

Apart from dairying two other sectors of farming underwent a particularly rapid restructuring - pigs and poultry. Immediately after the War there was a dramatic increase in pig production in West Devon, although numbers still lagged behind those of Devon as a whole. The Exeter Survey of the 7 Parishes showed the percentage composition of livestock units (46) devoted to pigs to rise from 1.7% in 1948 to 4.2% in 1953. In absolute terms the number of pigs kept trebled during this period. By contrast poultry numbers stayed roughly constant and as a proportion of livestock units declined from 9.4% to 4.9%. In 1968 25.1% of all farms in England and Wales kept breeding pigs and 50.3% laying hens.

By 1974 the respective figures had dropped to 18.5% and 34.1%, with the smaller farms suffering disproportionate losses. Of the 100 Sample only 12% kept breeding pigs and although 46% kept some poultry only 4% kept more than 25 birds. No less than 46 farmers in the sample had given up a pig and/or poultry enterprise during the course of their farming career. Only one farmer had recently started a new pig or poultry enterprise. However these processes of specialisation and concentration should not mask the fact that the number of pigs and poultry in the 41 Parishes was not substantially reduced during the post-war period. As Table 4.3 shows pig numbers remained more or less static during the 1954 to 1979 period and poultry numbers nearly doubled. Figure 4.1 shows how these changes were unevenly distributed over the parishes. In the overwhelming majority of parishes the number of cattle increased during the period, in line with the general trend for the survey Parishes as a whole.

Figure 4.1

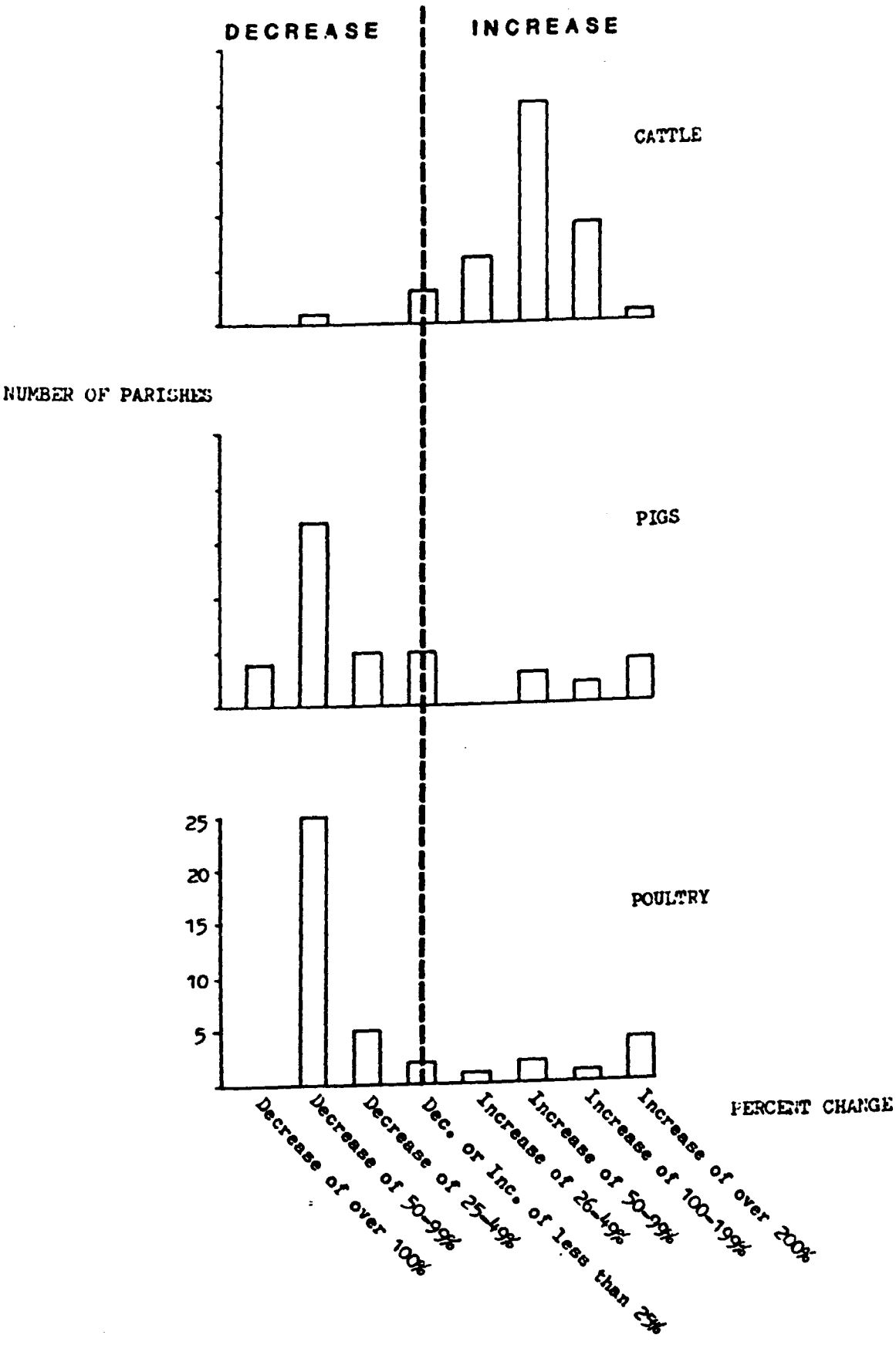

DECREASE
INCREASE
CATTLE
NUMBER OF PARISHES
PIGS
25
20
15
10
5
POULTRY
PERCENT CHANGE
Decrease of over 100%
Decrease of 50-99%
Decrease of 25-49%
Dec. or Inc. of less than 25%
Increase of 26-49%
Increase of 50-99%
Increase of 100-199%
Increase of over 200%

Table 4.3. Cropping and Stocking in the 41 Parishes, 1954-1979.

	1954	1962	1970	1979
Acreage Wheat.	670	330	354	994
Acreage Barley.	1,254	14,279	12,275	14,517
Acreage Oats.	8,294	2,249	2,652	1,310
Acreage Grass. (Temp & Perm)	107,273	113,527	120,922	122,835
Grass as a % of Crops and Grass.	77*	82*	87	86
Rough Grazing as a % of Total Area.	16	14	11.5	7.5
Total No Pigs.	21,912	24,952	30,637	21,386
Total No Cattle.	53,836	61,765	82,044	96,538
Total No Poultry.	318,709	370,620	417,942	604,081
Total No Sheep.	88,283	113,620	131,167	141,152
No of Dairy Cows per total No of Cattle.	.178	.257	.283	.275

*Nb. A high acreage of mixed corn for fodder was grown during these years.

However the pig and poultry sectors declined markedly in most of the parishes, but showed a disproportionate increase in a few parishes, where particular individual holdings now dominate production. The final section of the Exeter Survey was devoted to the financial performance of the farms in the area. The financial performance of 24 farms within the 7 Parishes was compared to that of 40 farms in the 16 peripheral and better-land Culm parishes. Incomes on average in the 16 parishes were nearly double those in the 7 parishes, but this was partly due to the larger farms represented in the 16 parishes. However the farms of the 7 Parishes were characterised by lower productivity and higher costs. The comments in the draft report on the reasons for this "low level of management" are illuminating:

> The frequency with which the native Devon (breed of cattle) appeared was surprising in view of the position occupied by milk in their pattern of output, and was probably related to the fondness of farmers for still engaging in the rearing of store stock. Coupled with this factor of low yielding cows was the factor of a low level of feeding, particularly noticeable in the use of purchased feedingstuffs. Important as these two factors are, however, they seem to be themselves expressions of a far more deep-seated cause of the low level of dairy management achieved on these farms. Tradition, particularly in the matter of livestock husbandry, dies hard in rural areas and operates as a brake to the introduction of sudden changes. In this connection it must be remembered that the history of milk production in North-West Devon is a comparatively short one, and that in addition, many farmers now selling milk have turned to this form of production through economic necessity rather than preference. In such circumstances it can hardly be a matter for surprise that many attitudes acquired in the practice of the traditional store-rearing enterprise appear to have been carried over into the newer one of milk production. Before there can be any hope, therefore, for the effective and widespread introduction of improved dairy techniques on many of the small farms of the Hoslworthy area, the operators of these holdings must re-orientate their outlook to the extent of thinking themselves as "dairy farmers" rather than as store rearers who have been reluctantly forced into dairying.

In the event the re-orientation occurred to the extent that most dairy farmers moved from Devon cattle to Friesians and many specialised in milk production.

However at the same time these processes of specialisation, and the pressures on producers to specialise and invest in new technologies, such as facilities for the bulk as opposed to churn collection of milk, meant that many dispensed with milk production altogether and returned to store rearing or more often fattening. In the UK as a whole the restructuring of the dairy sector proceeded at a much more rapid pace than for other sectors of livestock production, excluding pigs and poultry. The number of holdings with dairy cows declined by 42% just in the decade 1970-1980, whereas the number of holdings with beef cows declined by 19% and those with breeding sheep by just 10% during the same period. Between 1970 and 1980 the average size of dairy herd rose from 30 cows to 51 an increase of 70%. The contrasts between the different sectors of production, once so closely linked, warrant closer attention in the next chapter.

These adjustments in the cropping and stocking regimes were accompanied by equally fundamental changes in the size of farms, the intensity of production and in the use of labour. The decline in the use of hired labour is simply and dramatically put - the number of farm workers was slashed by two-thirds between 1954 and 1979. 1,459 farm workers were employed on the farms of the 41 Parishes in 1954 and only 530 by 1979. The rise of family farming, at least on the basis of that simple statistic alone, was dramatic. In twelve years alone, between 1950 and 1962, the decline in Devon's hired agricultural labour force was of the order of 30%, from 24,000 to 17,000 (47). In a study of labour utilisation on 28 farms in South West England, based on detailed diary accounts, Davies found in 1960 that 52% of labour was provided by the

farmer and members of the family (48).

The detailed implications of these changes in labour use are discussed in the next chapter and will receive no further attention here. Such reductions in labour do not seem to have stood in the way of major increases in production. For example in a study of Devon and Cornwall Nixon and Kerr have shown how a 30% increase in grazing livestock numbers between 1965 and 1974 took place with only a 2% increase in fodder and grass acreage (49). Better management and more inputs of fertiliser, concentrated feedingstuffs, and new capital investment in labour saving devices explain the increase. The decline in hired labour at the same time as massive increases in intensity and productivity could only be brought about through major investments of capital and new technology. Even excluding land values, which have increased dramatically in the post-war period, the gross capital stock of UK farms showed an increase of over a third in real terms between 1968 and 1978 (50). The number of tractors in the UK increased from 455,000 in 1959 to 491,000 in 1977 in spite of the decline in the number of farms and the increased capacity of existing tractors. Balers in the UK increased from 68,000 to 105,000 during the same period (51).

In the years immediately following the War there was comparatively little adjustment in the farm size structure. Indeed Williams shows very limited changes in the number and size of holdings in Ashworthy between 1840 and 1960 (52). Table 4.4 shows that in the Survey Parishes there was a slight decline in the number of holdings in the 1950s. The rate of change speeded up in the 1960s and 1970s, although it remained modest compared, for example, to the labour restructuring during the same

period. Indeed in the 1950s there were signs that the farm size structure might permanently lag behind the new economic and technical conditions of post-war expansion. This led to a number of policies designed to tackle the 'farm structure problem'. The Small Farmer Scheme already mentioned, which sought to improve the viability of existing small farms, was one such attempt. Other policies aiming directly at encouraging farm amalgamations were more explicit and less successful (53). Thus in the first half of 1972 amalgamations approved under the government's farm amalgamation schemes ran at the rate of 1,200 a year, perhaps 25% of the actual disappearance of such holdings (54). Only one of the 100 Sample had participated in such a scheme.

In fact, as Hine and Houston have pointed out, there were a number of very good reasons for the slowness with which the holdings structure changed. In the first instance much of the technical change was accommodated even on existing farms by increased specialisation and use of contract services (55). Probably of greater importance initially was the fact that subsidies softened the impact of the cost-price squeeze so insulating existing small farms from the changes eventually forced upon them (56). Thirdly Hine and Houston point to the occupational immobility of elderly farmers leading to the postponement of structural adjustment (57). Under owner-occupation farmers were no longer compelled to make increasing rental payments each year, still less to maintain certain standards of husbandry. The CACs' role in overseeing husbandry standards diminished as war-time experiences receded, their powers in this aspect being repealed in 1958. It was a common finding in the Survey that farmers, with no children, chose to continue in farming allowing the farm business to contract rather than to sell the farm. Apart from the

increased measure of independence that allows this, a powerful economic incentive - the avoidance of Capital Gains Tax and Capital Transfer Tax - also promotes the strategy.

Thus amalgamation, and resistance to amalgamation, concerns much more than merely technical structural adjustment. The rate of amalgamation is influenced by complex social, cultural and economic factors. Certainly in the survey area there was a powerful feeling, especially among the smaller farmers themselves, that small farms should be retained. In some instances farmers were clearly proud that through their ownership of land they were able to slow down the rate of amalgamation:

> If you ever run forty acres you'll find that the big farmers will ask you umpteen times if you're thinking of selling it. A big farmer two farms away is dying to get his hands on this. (40 acre dairy farmer)

Many farmers were quick to point to the strength and security given to family farming by owner-occupation, especially in the context of the threat of institutional buyers of agricultural land:

> Big buyers can only step in where someone is going out. They will never drive a family out, and they can't farm so efficently. (300 acre livestock farmer)

However, notwithstanding these sentiments and the overwhelming faith of many interviewed in the capacity of the small family farmer to survive, the number of farms has declined, especially those under 50 acres. The rate of amalgamation of farms increased in the 1960s when the cost-price squeeze began to bite. Smaller farms began to disappear at a faster rate. Farms of 20-100 acres declined in England and Wales by only 0.09% per annum between 1944 and 1949, but by 1964-69 the rate had increased to 2.7% (58). Between 1955 and 1975 the proportion of the crops and grass area of England and Wales farmed in holdings of over 300 acres rose from 27% to 43%. Table 4.4 shows corresponding changes in the farm

size structure of West Devon. However, some words of caution are needed for the dramatic decline in the number of holdings under 50 acres is partly a result of the systematic exclusion of "statisitically insignificant" holdings by the Ministry thereby eliminating some of the very smallest holdings. Thus in 1969 a threshold of statistical significance was set at 26 standard man days. This accounted for the loss of 47,000 holdings in England and Wales (59). Refinements in 1970 and 1973, when the lower limit was raised to 50 standard man days, accounted for a further loss.

Table 4.4 The Number of Holdings in the 41 Parishes, 1954-1979.

Size Groups* (acres)	1954	1962	1970	1979
Under 50	1,134	976	690	649
50-99	551	581	512	535
100-499	464	459	512	535
Over 500	2	4	9	11
Totals	2,151	2,020	1,823	1,730
Adjusted Totals	2,151	2,020	1,996	1,958

* Unfortunately it is impossible to have a finer gradation of size group between 100 and 499 acres due to the change from acres to hectares in the 1970s.

Attempts have been made to account for these alterations when discussing structural change. Thus Aitchison, in looking at Welsh agriculture

between 1968 and 1974, calculated that of a decline of 16,632 in the number of holdings, 8,900 was due to the loss of statisitically insignificant holdings: 6,400 in 1968/9, 2,000 in 1970, and 500 in 1973 (60). Davies has used similar proportions for Devon and Cornwall (61). By using Aitchison's proportions adjusted figures have been calculated (Table 4.4) to include the lost holdings so as to allow a more accurate estimate of the change in number of holdings.

Table 4.5 Change in Farm Size and Number of Years in Farming, 100 Sample.

Change in Farm Size (Acres)	Number of Years in Farming 0-4	5-9	10-19	20-29	30+	Row Total
+ 100 or more	2	0	4	2	2	10
+ 50-99	0	0	6	3	2	11
+ 25-49	0	0	3	2	2	7
+ 1-24	1	2	4	4	6	17
No Change	10	6	10	13	8	47
- 1-24	0	0	0	0	2	2
- 25-49	0	0	1	0	1	2
- 50-99	0	0	1	1	1	3
- 100 or more	0	0	0	1	0	1
Column Totals	14	9	29	25	23	100

With the unadjusted figures there is a decline of 19% in the number of holdings in the Parishes between 1954 and 1979. The adjusted decline is of the order of just 9%. However it also has to be remembered that there has been an increase in holdings held in severalty but still registered in the Census as separate holdings. The evidence from the 100 Sample is of a greater increase in the size of farms than a 9% decline in holding numbers might indicate, as shown in Table 4.5. Forty five farmers had increased the size of holding during the course of their farming career compared to eight who had reduced the farm size. Perhaps even more striking is that a majority of farmers (53%) have experienced farm size changes, indicating a considerable degree of adjustment at the local level which is lost in the presentation of overall trends. Where change had not occurred this was often purely as a result of recent occupancy as the Table shows.

CONCLUSION

Clearly the post 1945 era has marked a new departure for agriculture in the UK and in Devon. Government support on a hitherto unprecedented scale has spawned a massive increase in production and technical and economic sophistication in all sectors of the industry. In some commodities this has meant a wholesale restructruring and concentration, so that the pig and poultry sectors are by and large no longer viable alternatives for the smaller family producers. Thus there has been a narrowing of the commodity mix on which family farming's reproduction is based. This narrowing and specialisation has been further sharpened by

the changes in the dairy sector. Dairying remains the mainstay of West Devon agriculture but it is confined to fewer and fewer more intensive and specialised producers, with the remainder of farmers rearing and fattening sheep and cattle.

These changes in farm production have been accompanied by a decline in the use of hired labour as further capital growth and mechanisation occurs, an increase in the average size of holding and a growth in the extent of owner-occupation. The nature of contemporary family farming and the family farmers which have emerged from these changes now has to be explored. A number of questions need to be answered. It is clear that commoditisation, in terms of the volume of goods put onto the market and in the increasing importance of certain key inputs such as machinery and fertilisers, has increased but are there any ways in which resistance to commoditisation occurs under such conditions? Does the apparently increasingly familial nature of production and the extent of owner-occupation limit the logic of commoditisation? These are questions which have to be answered by extending the analysis from beyond the use of census material and basic quantitative data from the 100 sample to a more detailed analysis of the working practices and social organisation of those interviewed in the 100 sample.

FOOTNOTES

1. See for example BERESFORD, T. (1975) We Plough the Fields: British Farming Today, Harmondsworth: Penguin; HURD, A. (1951) A Farmer in Whitehall. Britain's Farming Revolution 1939-1950, London: Faber. The earliest use of the "revolution" terminology which I have discovered dates back to the immmediate post-war period: "The whole tempo of invention and discovery in the agricultural field has so quickened, and the outlook of the farmer has been so advanced, that the present era might be justly termed "The Second Agricultural Revolution"." These were the concluding words of MOORE, H.I. (1947) Background to Farming, London: George Allen and Unwin.

2. The county council committees had existed in many counties since the end of the last century - Devon's dated from 1907 - but counties did not have a statutory duty to provide such committees until the passing of emergency legislation during the First World War and subsequently the passing of the 1919 Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Act.

3. A brief history of the county committees is given in Appendix 5, a copy of WINTER, M. (1985) Administering land-use policies for agriculture: a possible role for county agriculture and conservation committees, Agricultural Administration, 18 (4), pp.235-249. For a discussion of the County Agricultural Committees and the state direction self regulation axis see: COX, G. LOWE, P. and Winter, M. (1985) Changing directions in agricultural policy: corporatist arrangements in production and conservation policies, Sociologia Ruralis, 25 (2), pp.130-154. Some of the details in this section are based on research undertaken with Cox and Lowe on the role of County Agricultural Committees. The empirical work on this topic has been carried out by myself and both the research findings and interpretation provided here are entirely my own.

4. HAYTER HAMES, G.C. (1942) War-time food production: the work of war agricultural executive committees - Devon, Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 103, pp.86-90.

5. WHETHAM, E.H. (1952) British Farming 1939-49, London: Nelson. p.25. On war time agriculture see also: MURRAY, A.H. (1955) History of the Second World War: Agriculture, London: HMSO & Longman.

6. HAYTER HAMES, G.C. (1942) op. cit. p.86.

7. WHETHAM, E.H. (1952) op. cit p.39.

8. BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) Agricultural Enterprise on the Red Loams and Culm Measures of Devon - an Analytical Survey, University of Exeter Ph.D. Thesis. Most of Blunden's thesis revolves around the historical background to agricultural techniques in Devon and the mapping and description of contemporary (1957) agriculture using the parish agricultural June returns. Thus much of the thesis is an exercise in cartography - the sections on history and policy are largely derivative of secondary sources - and sociological concerns are not addressed. The

49 Culm Measure parishes in his survey stretch in a band from Chulmleigh in the east to Pyworthy in the west. Although about half of our survey parishes are included in the 49 parishes a direct comparison is rendered very difficult as Blunden includes the eastern parishes, which occupy much better land, to provide a balance to the western poorer parishes around Holsworthy.

9. ibid. and HORNE, F.R. (1943) Experiences in land reclamation - Devon, Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, 104, pp.90-100.

10. HAYTER HAMES, G.C. (1942) op. cit.

11. BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) op. cit.

12. HAYTER HAMES, G.C. (1942) op. cit. p.90.

13. ibid. p.88.

14. WHETHAM, E.H. (1952) op. cit.

15. GRIGNON, C. (1982) The professionalisation and transformation of the social hierarchy of farmers, Paper presented to the Rural Economy and Society Study Group Franco-British Colloquium, Trinity College, Oxford.

16. SANDERS, H.G. and ELEY, G. (1946) Farms of Britain, London: Crosby Lockwood & Sons.

17. On the Selborne Committee see WHETHAM, E.H. (1978) The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol. VIII, 1914-39, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

18. SELF, P. and STORING, H. (1962) The State and the Farmer, London: George Allen and Unwin.

19. The figure was increased to £30 million in 1960. For a concise review of the development of agricultural policy in the 1950s and 1960s see BOWLER, I. (1979) Government and Agriculture: A Spatial Perspective, London: Longman. A more lively account is provided by BERESFORD, T. (1975) op.cit. The only book available which attempts to provide a conventional agricultural history of the post-war period is in fact rather thin and contains an alarming number of inaccuracies: HOLDERNESS, B.A. (1985) British Agriculture since 1945, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

20. NEWBY, H. (1980) Green and Pleasant Land? Social Change in Rural England, Harmondsworth: Penguin. pp.107-108. Newby is referring to research conducted in the 1960s: BRADLEY, J. (1963) The Small Farm Scheme: A Study of 40 Schemes in a Small Area of Devon, University of Exeter Agricultural Economics Unit, Report No.144.

21. BERESFORD, T. (1975) op.cit.

22. WILSON, G. (1977) Special Interests and Policy Making: Agricultural Policies and Politics in Britain and the USA 1956-70, Chichester: John Wiley. p.14.

23. BERESFORD, T. (1975) op.cit. p.49.

24. ibid. p.51.

25. ibid.

26. There have been a number of studies of the common pricing mechanisms of the CAP. A particularly approachable analysis of this rather complex matter is MARSH, J.S. and SWANNEY, P.J. (1980) Agriculture and the European Community, London: George Allen and Unwin. Notwithstanding several more recent contributions perhaps the most detailed and thorough account available remains FENNEL, R. (1979) The Common Agricultural Policy of the European Community, London: Granada. An interesting account of the legal aspects of the CAP is provided in SNYDER,F.G. (1985) Law of the Common Agricultural Policy, London: Sweet & Maxwell.

27. WHETHAM, E.H. (1952) op. cit.

28. ibid.

29. ibid.

30. ibid.

31. BRITTON, D.K. (1960) The disappearance of the farm horse in England and Wales, The Statistician, 10, pp.80-88. Quoted in BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) op. cit. p.338.

32. See FEDERATION OF UK MILK MARKETING BOARDS, (annual) Dairy Facts and Figures, Thames Ditton: MMB.

33. EXETER. (1956) A Study of a Problem Area on the Culm Measures of North West Devon. This unpublished survey and draft report provides a fascinating wealth of data and information on the study area in the early 1950s. The report, which was given restricted circulation within the then Provincial Agricultural Economics Service (PAES) and MAFF's National Agricultural Advisory Service, was prepared by a team of agricultural economists of the Bristol Province II of the PAES at Newton Abbot under the general direction of Mr S T Morris, Provincial Economist for the South West Province. A draft of the report is now held by the Agricultural Economics Unit of the University of Exeter as a result of the transfer of Bristol Province II to Exeter University in 1961. It has been made available by a member of the Unit, Mr John Dunford, one of the original authors. The main part of the study was of 240 farms of 25 acres or more in size, which made up 96% of the total farmed area of the seven survey parishes. These are all parishes subsequently covered in my own survey. They are Ashwater, Black Torrington, Bradford, Cookbury, Halwill, Hollacombe and Highampton. The information on the farms was gained from access to disaggregated data taken from the June returns for 1953, milk production data for the twelve months from April 1953 to March 1954, and returns of agricultural machinery made to the Ministry in January 1954. The data on the seven parishes was complemented by less exhaustive data from further sixteen control parishes selected from the

surrounding area, six falling within our survey area. Subsequently a further stage of the research sougth detailed financial information for the period 1947/48 to 1956/57 which was obtained for 24 farms in the seven parishes and a further 40 farms in the control parishes.

34. Farmgate deliveries of feeding stuffs still occur but merchants are more reluctant to provide the service and many farmers now find it financially advantageous, due to the favourable terms offered by merchants, to make bulk purchases or collect their own feeding stuffs.

35. BERESFORD, T. (1975) op.cit.

36. BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) op. cit.

37. See the various annual reports on farm incomes and the farm management surey published by the Exeter University Agricultural Unit.

38. LUXTON, H. (1979) Dairy farm incomes in South West England 1967/68 to 1976/77, University of Exeter Farm Business Review, 5, pp.62-66.

39. BLUNDEN, J.R. (1965) op. cit.

40. RUSSELL, K. (1949) Making Money from Cows, Ipswich: The Dairy Farmer Ltd. For accounts of this period of expansion in milk production see BAKER, S. (1973) Milk to Market, London: Heinemann; JENKINS,A. (1970) Drinka Pinta, London: Heinemann.

41. BRITTON, D.K. (1977) Some explorations in the analysis of long term changes in the structure of agriculture, Journal of Agricultural Economics, 28, pp.197-209.

42. RICKARD, R.C. LUXTON, H.W.B. and MORRIS, S.T. (1962) Financing the Farm Business, University of Exeter Agricultural Economics Unit, Report No.137. p.49.

43. ibid. p.51.

44. DAVIES,, G.D.D. DUNFORD, W.J. and MORRIS, S.T. (1971) Aspects of Farm Financial Structure, University of Exeter Agricultural Economics Unit, Report No.185.

45. ibid.

46. Grazing livestock units are used to standardise stocking figures and so allow comparison between different classes of livestock. The details are given in Appendix 6.

47. DAVIES, E.T. (1963) A Study of Labour Utilisation on a Sample of Farms in South West England 1960/61, Newton Abbot: University of Exeter Agricultural Economics Unit, Report No. 143.

48. ibid.

49. NIXON, B.R. and KERR, G. (1976) Has intensity increased the financial problems in farming?, University of Exeter Farm Business

Review, 2, pp.23-29.

50. BRITTON, D.K. BURRELL, A.M. HILL, B. and RAY, D. (1980) Statistical Handbook of UK Agriculture, School of Rural Economics, Wye College.

51. ibid.

52. WILLIAMS, W.M. (1963) A West Country Village Ashworthy, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

53. Provision for such schemes was made under the 1957 Agriculture Act and again under the 1967 Agriculture Act. The most important schemes were the Amalgamation Grants Scheme and Payment to Outgoers Scheme, both starting in 1967.

54. HINE, R.C. and HOUSTON, A.M. (1973) Government and Structural Change in Agriculture, Joint Report prepared by Universities of Nottingham and Exeter.

55. ibid.

56. ibid.

57. ibid.

58. ibid.

59. DAVIES, E.T. (1976) The Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks: Changes in Farming Structure, 1952-72, Uinversity of Exeter, Agricultural Economics Unit Report.

60. AITCHISON, J.W. The agricultural landscape of Wales, Part 1. The structure of agricultural holdings, 1964-74, Cambria, 6 (1), pp.32-53.

61. DAVIES, E.T. (1980) Some aspects of the changing structure of farming in Cornwall and Devon 1957 to 1977, University of Exeter Farm Business Review, 6, pp.20-28.

Chapter 5

FAMILY FARMING IN WEST DEVON TODAY.

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have traced the history of family farming in West Devon and given some general indications of the contemporary structure of farming in the survey area. In addition some of the main theoretical preoccupations of the thesis have been discussed. This chapter has two main functions; first to supply some basic sociographic and farm structural detail of the general nature and characteristics of contemporary family farming; and secondly to address the issue of specialisation and the contrasts that have arisen between dairy and livestock production. Both these concerns provide essential ingredients on which to base subsequent discussion of the work situation and the reasons for the survival of family farming.

It should be clear, by now, that by the 1970s West Devon's agriculture was characterised by a high degree of specialisation, intensification and dependence on family as against hired labour. Technologically sophisticated, and constantly adapting to the changing economic demands of post war policies, West Devon's farmers present a picture far removed from any notion of a static unchanging peasantry. On the other hand, as this chapter and later chapters show, this adaptation to national economic circumstances should not hide the continuity of social form. Indeed some tendencies, such as the increase in owner-occupation, point towards a reassertion of resistance to commoditisation. Clearly resistance can be a result of both closure, on the one hand, and an alternative rationale on the other. Furthermore the overall line of development in the farming structure as a whole masks a number of lines of cleavage within the farming population. There are contradictions

within the process of commoditisation which are sources of a more heterogeneous agricultural structure than might at first appear to be the case.

THE SOCIOGRAPHY OF WEST DEVON FARMERS

The majority of the farmers in the 100 Sample have agricultural backgrounds, often with farming experience confined to the West Devon area. This should not, however, divert attention from a significant number of newcomers both to farming and to the West Devon area and often to both. Around one quarter of the 100 Sample fall into this category and they provide a quite distinct group in a number of ways. Table 5.1 shows a breakdown of the Sample according to place of birth and upbringing.

Table 5.1 Place of Birth and Upbringing, 100 Sample.

	Birth	Upbringing
Present Farm	25	36
10 miles	36	30
10-19 miles	12	9
20-49 miles	2	1
50-99 miles	2	3
100+ miles	23	21

Table 5.1 shows the low degree of geographical mobility for a significant proportion of the Sample. No less than 75% of the sample were born and bred within twenty miles of the farm currently occupied. With most of the remainder being "newcomers" from "up-country", only a tiny proportion of farmers had moved from other farming regions of the South-West, a reflection, perhaps, of the physical difficulties of farming in the Holsworthy area, well known in other more favoured areas of the West Country. Those from further afield were less likely to be well-versed in such 'reputations', or indeed to have farming experience at all. 72% of the Sample had fathers who were farmers before them, and a further six had farm workers as fathers (see Table 5.6). Only 31 had spent more than a quarter of their working lives in full-time occupations off their own farms, and only 16 more than half.

Thus a majority had come into farming at fairly early stages of their career, often straight from school. Nevertheless 49 had some experience of working full-time away from their own or parents' farm. Of these 21 had had jobs in agriculture, often as farm workers to relatives or neighbours during the early stages of a farming career. Only five had any professional or managerial experience outside agriculture, with nine others having undertaken some other form of non-manual work. In view of the predominance of a farming background it is not surprising to learn that most farmers inherited the ownership (or tenure) of their holding, although inheritance can mask a number of varying economic relations to the land as shown below.

In terms of schooling and education the farmers in the 100 Sample show a

marked adherence to the old style of 'occupational training' on the farms of friends or relatives, or the home family farm. In most cases there was no formal period of training at all, with farmers' sons labouring on the family farm from an early age, as young as nine or ten years in some cases, and assuming gradually greater responsibilities for the day to day running of the farm. Few achieved above average school attainments, still less partook of the extensive network of agricultural education developed by the county council during the inter and post-war periods.

Table 5.2 Type of School Attended, 100 Sample.

Village/Elementary	30
Secondary Modern	41
Grammar	8
Fee-Paying	20
Other	1
Total	100

Table 5.3 Age of Completion of Full-time Education, 100 Sample.

13-14	47
15-16	37
17-18	13
19+	3
Total	100

Table 5.4 Highest Level of School Examinations Passed, 100 Sample.

None	75
School Certificate	8
1-4 'O' Levels	4
5+ 'O' Levels	2
'A' Levels	5
Other	6
Total	100

Table 5.5 Highest Level of Agricultural Qualification or Course, 100 Sample.

None	74
Short Course	15
City & Guilds	3
National Certificate of Agriculture or Ordinary National Diploma	7
University Degree	1
Total	100

Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 chart the parameters of this low level of educational attainment. The picture that emerges is that of a predominantly 'local' and 'traditional' farming stock. Long distance mobility is relatively unusual, levels of formal education are low, and

a farming background is common. This is born out still more if the contrast between 'locals' and 'outsiders' is considered. For example of the seven farmers holding National Certificates or Ordinary National Diplomas in Agriculture, no less than five were born and bred and brought up more than one hundred miles away from West Devon. Furthermore those born and brought up at a greater distance were less likely to have an agricultural background than 'local' farmers, as brought out in Table 5.6, showing the occupations of respondents' fathers by place of upbringing. It is striking that all the farmers with fathers with professional jobs were 'outsiders'. It is clear that a minority of farmers occupy a very different 'sociographic' niche to the norm provided by 'local Devonians'.

Table 5.6 Place of Upbringing by Father's Occupation, 100 Sample.

Place of Upbringing	Father's Occupation				
	Own Business	Professional	Manual	Farm Worker	Farmer
Present farm	1	0	0	0	35
1-10 miles	3	0	1	5	20
10-19 miles	0	0	1	1	7
20-99 miles	2	0	1	1	2
100+ miles	4	7	1	0	8
Totals*	10	7	3	6	72

* Total=98. 2 Non-responses.

A similar picture emerges from looking at the occupational background of

the respondents' spouses' fathers, as shown in Table 5.7. Non-local farmers are far less likely to have married into a farming family than local farmers.

Table 5.7 Place of Upbringing by Occupation of Spouses' Father.

Place of Upbringing	Farmer	Farm Worker	Non-Agricultural	N/A
Present Farm	23	1	5	7
1-10 miles	22	2	5	1
10-19 miles	7	0	2	0
20-99 miles	1	0	3	0
100+ miles	3	0	15	3
Total	56	3	30	11

The contrast holds true when looking at the occupations of brothers of farmers. Of fifeteen brothers in professional occupations ten are the brothers of farmers brought up more than one hundred miles away. In the Sample as a whole 41 have at least one brother farming, the majority farming locally. The importance of a locally based network of farming relatives was indicated in the discussion of labour organisation in the last chapter. As well as being excluded from such kin networks of labour use the 'outsider' farmers also possess other characteristics which contrast to those of local farmers. As already indicated incomer farmers tend to have higher levels of education than locals, and a more varied occupational background. They are more likely to have relatives in professional or managerial occupations and are more likely to have close

friends in such occuaptions. Their kin and friendship networks are more national than those of local farmers, although it would be a mistake to push this distinction too far - few locals are without at least one close relative who has migrated "up-country" or even abroad, and by contrast there are outsiders who now have few remaining "up-country" contacts.

CONTEMPORARY FARM STRUCTURE: SIZE AND TYPE

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 show the size structure of holdings in the parishes. This reveals the continued predominance of small to medium size farms, and a marked absence of many large farms. The average holding size of 36.17 hectares (89.38 acres) is considerably lower than that for England and Wales as a whole of 48.12 hectares (118.9 acres), although the proportion of total holdings under 20 hectares (50 acres) is actually lower in West Devon (40.8%) than in England and Wales (45.8%). The average size of the 100 Sample farms is larger than the census average, partly a result of the sampling bias referred to in the first chapter. The mean size of the sample farms is 149.5 acres and the mode 106 acres. The distributions are essentially bi-modal suggesting a dualistic structure rather than a heterogeneous one.

The nature of the 100 Sample and the statistics derived from the June returns illustrates the predominance of medium size family farms in the region, with relatively few small specialist pig and poultry or market garden holdings, as well as few very large farms. This leads to a more general discussion of the type of farming. Clearly specialisation is a major feature of West Devon agriculture. It is one aspect of a number of

profound changes which have taken place in the organisation of family farming in the post-war years. Specialisation has important consequences for the internal and external differentiation of family farms.

Table 5.8 The 41 Parishes: Size of Holdings, Hectares, June, 1979.

	Number of Holdings	Percentage of Holdings
Under 20 Ha	649	40.8
20-30 Ha	220	13.8
30-40 Ha	175	11.0
40-50 Ha	129	8.1
50-100 Ha	319	20.1
100-200 Ha	87	5.5
200 + Ha	11	0.7

Table 5.9 The 41 Parishes: Size of Holdings, SMDs, June, 1979.

	Number of Holdings	Percentage of Holdings
1-99 SMD	524	33.0
100-174 SMD	165	10.4
175-249 SMD	148	9.3
250-499 SMD	354	22.3
500-999 SMD	294	18.5
1,000 + SMD	105	6.6

Table 5.10 shows an initial classification by type of farming of the farms of the 41 Parishes. The table appears to show a considerable degree of specialisation, with only 1.4% of farms being classified as

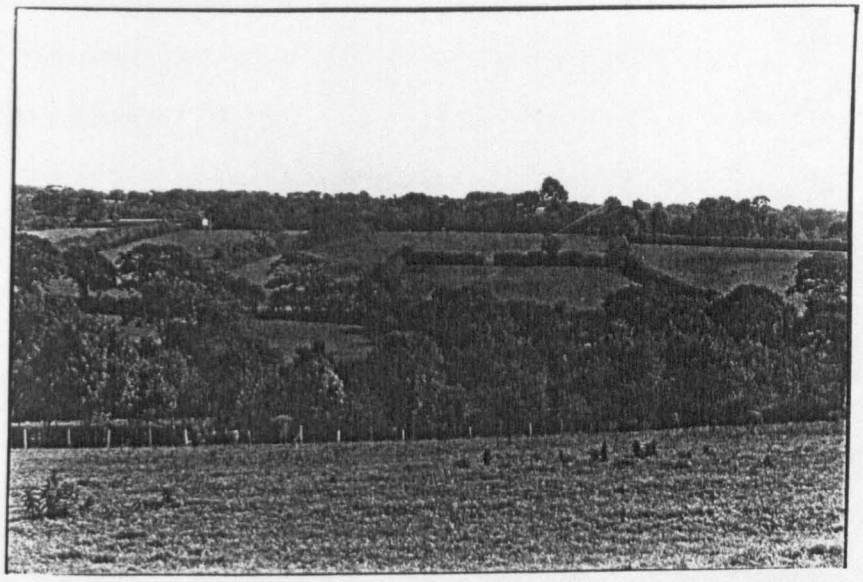
'mixed'. In fact this is partly a function of the classificatory system. It is certainly possible, and indeed relatively common, for farms classified as either dairying or livestock to have a significant other enterprise or enterprises (1). Using the same MAFF classification a break-down for the 100 Sample is given in Table 5.11.

Table 5.10 The 41 Parishes: Type of Farming, June, 1979.

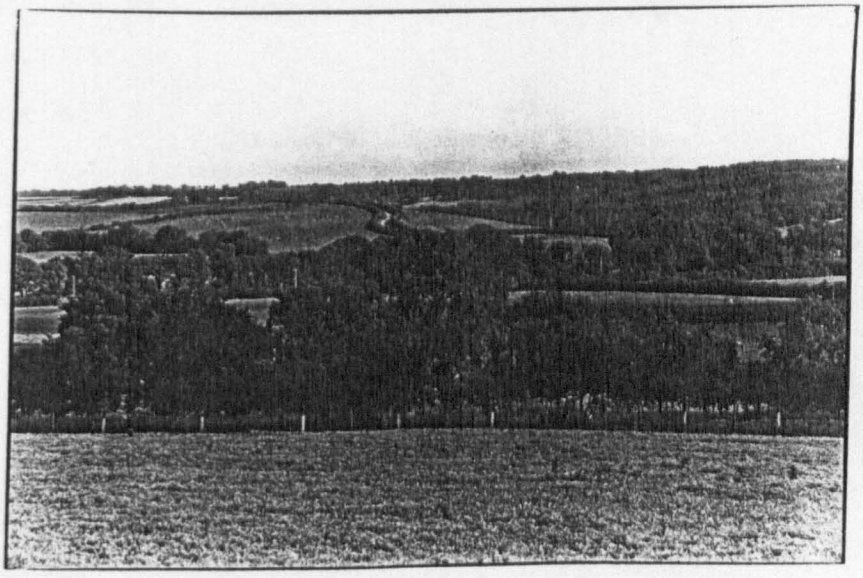
	Number of Holdings	Percentage of Holdings
Dairy	489	30.7
Livestock	201	12.6
Pig and Poultry	27	1.7
Arable or Horticultural	5	0.3
Mixed	22	1.4
Part-time	840	52.8

Table 5.11 Type of Farming 1, 100 Sample.

Dairy	46
Livestock	20
Pigs and Poultry	2
Arable	1
Mixed	4
Part-time	25
Unclassified	2
Total	100



Sheep and cattle country - Ashwater



The most striking point of comparison with the figures for the 41 Parishes is the much lower proportion of part-time farms in the 100 Sample, 25% as against 52.8%. This is largely accounted for by the bias against the very small holdings in the sampling procedure used for the selection of the 100 Sample (2). Only 15% of the 100 Sample occupy farms of less than 50 acres, compared to 40.8% of holdings in the 41 Parishes. It should be pointed out that a proportion of the small holdings recorded in the June returns will, in fact, be part of multiple-holding single farm enterprises. Nevertheless this would not account for all the discrepancy, which remains a function of the sampling technique.

One of the problems with the MAFF classification of holding types is the designation of part-time holdings as a separate category. This problem has been corrected for in the a re-classification of the 100 Sample, as shown in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Type of Farming 11, 100 Sample.

Dairy	51
Livestock	40
Pigs and Poultry	2
Arable	1
Mixed	4
Not Classified	2
Total	100

This table has been constructed by re-allocating all part-time farms in

the sample (ie. those judged to have a labour requirement of less than 250 standard man days) to other appropriate farm type categories using the same ratios as for full-time farms. The results are of interest for they reduce the dominance of dairying as the main farm type. Whereas dairying outnumbers livestock farming by two to one in the full-time sector, amongst part-time farms livestock farming dominates by a ratio of four to one. Thus in the second classification of type of farming, dairy farms account for 51% of the sample and livestock farms 40%. If the same figures for the re-classification were to be applied to those classified as part-time in the 41 Parishes, livestock farms would actually outnumber dairy farms. All this gives rise to two main areas for investigation; first the relationship this suggests between farm size and farm type; secondly the degree to which part-time farming as classified by the application of smds is matched by part-time farming in practice.

On the first question the high incidence of livestock farming amongst the part-time group indicates that livestock farms are, on the whole, smaller than the dairy farms (see Table 5.13). This is the case, despite the higher gross margins per acre achieved on dairy farms. Dairying is still important amongst the smaller full-time farmers but its place on the very small part-time farms has almost entirely disappeared. The growing specialisation and sophistication of dairying, the consequence of the impact of MMB policies, have been the main cause.

Table 5.13 Type of Farming 11, By Size of Farm. 100 Sample.

	Size of Farm (acres)			
	under 50	50-99	100-249	Over250
Dairy	4	12	20	15
Livestock	8	15	16	1
Pigs/Poultry	2	0	0	0
Arable	0	0	1	0
Mixed	1	0	0	1
Not Classified	1	0	0	1
All Farms	14	27	39	18

PART TIME FARMING

Secondly there is considerable evidence from other studies that the numbers of farms classified as part-time using the MAFF smd procedure does not automatically tally with the number of farmers who would classify themselves as part-time. Thus Aitchison, looking at the agricultural structure of Wales, observes that "notable regional departures from a one-to-one relationship suggest that whilst in some areas proportions of part-time farmers were greater than might have been expected, given the percentage of part-time farms ..., in others they were lower" (3). In most areas there are a greater number of part-time farms classified than part-time farmers. In other words a proportion of farmers occupy farms classified as part-time (ie.requiring less than 250 standard man days labour input), and yet consider themselves to be

full-time farmers. The ratio of part-time holdings to part-time farmers varies across the country. It is 1.58 in England and Wales as a whole, and 1.97 in the 41 parishes.

Gasson points out that there are three ways of defining part-time farming based on - a holding basis using smds, the actual hours worked by the farmer, and the existence of other gainful activities (4). Using these criteria produces different levels of importance for part-time farming in any area, and West Devon is no exception. Thus whereas only 25 of the 100 Sample occupy holdings of less than 250 smds in size, some 53 have some form of extra outside income. However only 19 devote less than the equivalent of full-time work (40 hours + per week) to their farms. The details of the incidence and nature of this part-time income and activity are laid out in Tables 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16.

A number of points emerge from these tables concerning the nature of part time activity of the farmers of the 100 Sample. First the disparity between the number of farms with an extra source of income and those working less than a full working week on their own farms is a result of the wide variety of extra income sources tapped and, in some instances, the very high inputs of labour to both the farming and the other occupation. One farmer in the sample, to take an extreme example, had until recently combined a lorry-driving job with a dairy farm and a retail milk-round. He frequently rose at three o'clock in the morning to milk the cows before setting off in the lorry at six or seven o'clock for a full day's work. His wife tended the young cattle, ran the milk-round, undertook the afternoon milking and performed all the housework! This colossal work load had proved the only means by which

this particlar family had found a toe-hold in farming. At about the time of the interview the farmer had for the first time in a ten year farming career found himself financially able to give up the regular lorry-driving to concentrate on the farm.

Table 5.14 Incidence of Part-Time Farming, 100 Sample.

(1) Classified by Income:	
Farms with any source of alternative income*	53
Farms with income derived from principal farmer's outside occupation	19
Farms with more than 10% of Income derived from non-farm sources	26
(2) Classified by Labour Inputs:	
Farms of less than 250 smds	25
Farmers working less than 40 hours per week on farm	19

*Nb. Only income from farmer or spouse is considered; children's income is excluded.

On other farms the situation may not be so severe with wife's earnings, old age pensions, farm based tourism, and a number of own businesses, including those in the contracting and dealing line, all providing sources of income allowing continued full-time work on the farm for the

farmer. It is striking how few farmers hold non-manual employed positions, indicating a very low proportion of hobby farmers, ie. those employed full-time in relatively high-paying professional or service sectors of the economy and farming in their spare time (5). This is in sharp contrast to Gasson's finding for a sample of farmers, selected from representative farming regions in England and Wales, where 35.6% of those employed in off-farm occupations held professional, administrative or managerial occupations (6).

Table 5.15 Sources of Farmer's Additional Income, 100 Sample.*

Not Applicable	47
Wife's Earnings	6
Pension	10
Contractor or Livestock Dealer	8
Farm Based Tourism	9
Employment - Farm Work	4
Employment - Non-farm Manual Work	3
Employment - Non-manual	2
Own Business	7
Investment or Property Income	9

* Nb. Total is greater than one hundred as some farmers had more than one source of income.

The range of farm sizes held by such farmers in the Gasson study indicates that only part of the discrepancy is a result of the bias against very small farmers in the 100 Sample. It seems likely that the location of the survey area, distant from any large centres of population, limits the number of farmers with professional jobs. Not surprisingly the two farmers with intermediate non-manual work both had occupations which were agriculturally based - one with a agricultural feeds firm and one with a firm of agricultural auctioneers. The occupations are predominantly of a self-employed and agricultural nature. With very few hobby farmers the work provides for most farmers a valuable source of additional income and a means by which family farming is maintained. Such part-time self-employed work, farm contracting being a prime example, is often more flexible, even than part-time employment, and the extent of involvement can be modified to suit changing farm requirements.

Table 5.16 Socio-economic Classification of Farmers with other Occupations, 100 Sample.

Not Applicable	76
Own Business, employing	3
Own Business, not employing	9
Professional or Managerial	0
Intermediate non-manual	2
Manual	6
Landlord	5

For the smallest farms an extra form of income is clearly essential. However, in line with the findings of Gasson (7) those farmers with additional sources of income in the 100 Sample were not necessarily small farmers, as shown in Table 5.17, which shows that part-time earnings are by no means the prerogative of the smaller, arguably more needy farmer.

Table 5.17 Part-Time Farming by Farm Size, 100 Sample.

Farm Size Categories	Non-Farm Income as a Proportion of Total. None.	1-10%.	10-49%	50+%.	NR.
Under 50 acres	3	1	2	7	2
50-99 acres	14	2	4	4	3
100-249 acres	19	14	4	1	1
250+ acres	13	2	2	2	0

A significant proportion of those with less than 100 acres do not have an alternative form of income. Exactly one half of the 100-249 acre farmers and one third of the over 250 acre farmers had some form of extra earnings. A high proportion of those in the 100-249 acre bracket, however, had only relatively small extra earnings (less than 10%). In fact these farms accounted for a high proportion of extra business

activity linked to the farm business, in particular contracting/dealing and farm based tourism. Seven out of the eight farmers practising contracting or dealing, and seven out of the nine providers of tourism occupied farms of over 100 acres. These activities do not provide a regular form of additional income for smaller farmers.

Part-time farming has attracted a considerable degree of attention in recent years and there have even been those who have even called for a general theory of the phenomenon (8). The heterogeneity of part-time farming activity makes any such attempts untenable. Instead it is more sensible to look at part-time farming activity within the context of a theory of agriculture. As an empirical phenomenon its importance is undeniable, and in any case-study of a particular geographical area it is important that the parameters of part-time farming in the area are understood. Hopefully this section has provided the relevant material, but in terms of the meaning of part-time farming, both in the past (as already referred to) and in the present, it is important to look at it in the context of the broader characteristics of agriculture - as a survival strategy in the development of the farm family cycle, as a process of proletarianisation or of capitalist business diversification, as a means of resistance to commoditisation, and so forth. This is the approach adopted in this study. Having discussed the type of farming and the nature of part-time farming activity it is important to look also at commodity production in the parishes, and in particular to pay some attention to the question of specialisation.

CONTEMPORARY FARM STRUCTURE: COMMODITY PRODUCTION AND SPECIALISATION

This section describes in some detail the contemporary nature of farming in the study area and the significance of commodity specialisation. Some of the implications of the degree of specialisation for understanding the nature of modern family farming are discussed. As earlier chapters showed, the region's farming historically has been largely pastoral in nature. This remains the case - grassland is the predominant land use and milk, beef and sheep-meat the main sources of income for the farmers.

The aggregate cropping and stocking figures for the 41 Parishes in 1979 are given in Table 5.18. The estimates of standard man day requirements and standard gross margins give an indication of the relative importance of the different sectors financially and in work terms. The predominance of cattle in the economy is of paramount importance for the majority of farmers, especially remembering the level of concentration in the pig and poultry sectors. Clearly the commodity basis of modern family farming in West Devon is narrow and based overwhelmingly on either milk or beef, with sheep giving a significant extra boost usually for beef producers (9). The insignificance of pig production is brought out particularly well in the figures. For example the smd calcualtions suggest that just 3.9% of farm labour is applied to pig production in the 41 Parishes.

Table 5.18 The 41 Parishes: Cropping and Stocking, June, 1979.

Area of Grass	49,710.6 ha
Area of Crops	7,792.6 ha
Area of Rough Grazing	5,939.2 ha
Area Rented	13,327 ha
Area Owner-Occupied	52,593.7 ha
Total Area	65,920.7 ha

	Number	GLUs	SMDs	SGM £ *
Dairy Cows in Milk	26,709	26,709	186,963	6,837,504
Cattle	96,538	57,923	193,076	6,757,660
Sheep	141,152	16,938	37,102	913,761
Pigs	21,386	na	18,809	659,741
Poultry	604,081	na	41,560	1,208,162

* GLUs = Grazing Livestock Units; SMDs = Standard Man Days; SGMs = Standard Gross Margins (10).

As a means of starting in farming, or involving the farmer's wife in an important farm enterprise, pig production no longer has a significant role to play. It is a minority enterprise, and it is now possible to come across farmers' children who have not seen pigs! Once ubiquitous they are now largely confined to factory farms and to affectionate portrayals in children's story-books. This decline was clearly lamented by a number of the farmers, especially the older ones. The villains of

the piece were usually seen as the large-scale producers who just by the magnitude of their production could withstand lower margins per pig and the feed merchants who had come to control the smaller producers. Market weakness has made the production of weaners for fattening elsewhere the most vulnerable sector of the pig trade. As one farmer retiring from small scale pig production put it:

> It's really virtually run by the millers, the pig business. They buy practically all the weaners; I never take them to market - got to sell them though the millers. If you were to put them through the local market you'd be bankrupt in five minutes. Millers only doing it to sell their food, especially in the summer. In the winter it's alright because the dairy farmer is buying, but they stick the price up as soon as the dairyman stops buying.

Only 12% of the farmed area is under any form of cropping, excluding temporary grass leys, and of this the majority of crops are grown for feeding to livestock on the farm. Small areas of swedes, turnips, kale and oats are still grown for this purpose, but such traditional fodder crops have been largely superseded by barley on many of those farms which continue to grow arable crops. Thus, of the 7,792.6 hectares devoted to cropping in the 41 Parishes, 75% is down to barley. In the 100 Sample 12.5% of the farmed area is under cropping, of which 86% is for the cultivation of barley. Forty-eight of the 100 Sample grew a grain crop, usually barley. The acreages grown varied from 5 to 125 acres (2.5-50 ha). Means were 16 acres (7 ha) for wheat, 28 acres (11 ha) for barley and 14 acres (6 ha) for oats. Such small acreages are indicative of the use of most crops for on-farm consumption by livestock. Nevertheless a significant minority of farmers do choose to sell quantities of grain, something which has been a growing tendency in recent years with sharp increases in grain prices as a consequence of EEC price support policies. The use to which home-grown cereals are put

on farms in the 100 Sample is shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19 Use of Home-grown Cereals, 100 Sample.

	Number of Farms
Not Grown	52
100% Sold	6
75% + Sold	2
50-75% Sold	2
50-75% Home Use	1
75% + Home Use	2
100% Home Use	32
Total	97 (3 non-responses)

The distribution of arable production, and to some extent the likelihood of production for sale, is associated with farm size. Indeed on farms of over 250 acres a majority grow some arable crops. Table 5.20 shows the degree to which the cultivation of arable crops and production for sale is linked to farm size. Only 15% of farms under 100 acres in size grow arable crops, compared to 73% of farms over 100 acres. Nearly one half of grain-producing farms of over 250 acres sell some of their grain compared to only a fifth of farms under 250 acres.

Table 5.20 Cultivation and Use of Cereals by Size of Farm, 100 Sample.

Size of Farm	Cultivation and Use of Crop			
	Not Grown*	50% + Sold	50-99% Home Use	100% Home Use
Under 50 acres	15	0	0	0
50-99 acres	19	2	0	6
100-249 acres	16	4	0	19
Over 250 acres	6	3	3	7

* Includes 3 non-responses.

Bearing in mind that the overwhelming majority of farms, even those selling some grain, are primarily livestock and/or milk producers, growing relatively small acreages of cereals, it is rather surprising to find that the larger farms are more likely to grow grain. It might have been expected that these more commercially orientated farms would have been more specialised in their production leaving a mixed and self-sufficient pattern of production to the smaller more traditional producers. In fact the nature of specialisation, as already indicated in the last chapter cannot be simply correlated with size of farm, for the larger farms have the capacity to produce more than one commodity without losing economies of scale. Thus some large farms growing grain will do so as a distinct and specialised, technically sophisticated operation. Acreages may be relatively small compared to those of the barley barons of East Anglia but the larger farmers grow sufficient for

their own primary livestock enterprises with perhaps a small surplus to sell at advantageous prices (no need for costly transport from East Anglia or Southern England) to local feeds firms. It is characteristically the larger farms, with the capital to invest in machinery and storage faciltiies, which have cashed in on the the potential of the grain market in recent years. Specialisation having been the path for survival for the smaller family farm and sometimes the path to prosperity for the larger farmer, some diversification and joint economies can now provide opportunities for the larger farmer which are not always available for the smaller farmer.

The balance between home consumption and the sale of grain depends, not only on quantities grown but also the size of farm, type of farming regime and the facilities for storage and home milling. Thus of the large growers some will sell and some not. A dairying enterprise located on a farm with the potential for significant arable cropping, will consume large acreages of arable crops. Thus one 240 acre farmer, with 75 dairy cows, grew 75 acres of cereals, all of which was used on the farm. But a 360 acre beef and sheep farmer sold, on average, half of his 55 acres of barley. Both farms, however, were similar in growing relatively large acreages, with the appropriate tackle to do so and good storage facilities for the grain. For both, arable cropping was a means of diversification - a way to spread risk and to even-out labour peaks without sacrificing efficiency or economies of scale. Thus the rationale behind growing arable crops is in sharp contrast to that of the smaller more traditional 'self-sufficient' farmer:

> I till about eight or nine acres of barley a year. I keep that for myself. That usually runs me through pretty well and I buy a bit of beet pulp and a few concentrated nuts to mix with it. That's my feed,

> and hay. I seem to get on alright with it. The cattle always do alright, at least I've found so. (80 acre livestock farmer)

Here the harvest is dependent on a contractor's combine, storage is in a traditional barn with no drying facilities, the grain being ground in small quantities through the winter as it is used. This elderly farmer grew grain as part of a traditional strategy to remain to some degree self-sufficient and insulated from the pressures of either the banks or feed firms. His farming regime would undoubtdly have been simpler and less labour intensive if he had kept a few more cattle and dispensed with arable production altogether. His style of farming is based on past conditions. Many other farmers of a similar size have dispensed with cropping to allow greater specialisation. Thus cropping can be a part of very different strategies in different conditions. On the smaller farms it tends to be the preserve of the more traditional, less intensive, older farmer. At the other end of the spectrum it is an important aspect of many large progressive farms. At least that is the kind of traditional-modern duality which appeared most useful at the time of interviewing, when agricultural expansion continued apace. Since that time commodity surpluses, the imposition of milk quotas, increasing indebtedness of the highly productive farmers, makes such a view more questionable. The farmer who is not indebted and who is able to meet his own needs for otherwise highly expensive concentrates may yet find himself, unwittingly perhaps, in the vanguard of the 'modern' farming dedicated to lower input-output 'quality' production.

That specialisation has occurred in West Devon over the last thirty years was shown in the last chapter, but how deep is that specialisation in contemporary agriculture and what does it mean to the structure of

farming? Certainly the days of widespread selling of milk as an adjunct to livestock rearing with maybe pigs and poultry as important side-lines have passed. This was lamented by a number of farmers, who stressed the benefits of mixed farming. On several occasions it was clear that specialised dairy production was seen only as an evil necessity. The economic, technical and social contrasts between dairying and livestock production are difficult to exaggerate, and it is really rather extraordinary how little attention has been focussed on this within, for example, the discipline of agricultural economics (11). And yet the financial figures for the two kinds of farming reveal such radical differences that economic notions such as maximisation, or even optimisation, of income must surely be brought into question. Table 5.21 shows some of the main contrasts.

Table 5.21 Contrasts between Dairying and Livestock Farming 1979/80 (12)

	Specialist Dairy 40.1 - 80.0 Ha	Lowland Cattle and Sheep. 80.0 Ha & under.
Total Variable Costs	426.1	185.5
Total Fixed Inputs*	419.5	276.1
Net Farm Income*	203.8	78.1
Stocking Rate@	2.0	1.6

* = £ per Hectare; @ = Grazing Livestock Units per Hectare.

The path of specialisation is clearly more than just a choice between two commodities likely to give more or less equal returns in businesses of similar financial and capital structure. To a considerable degree the two types of farming have come to correspond to two quite distinct kinds

of farming practice and intensity. The contrast is between 'high input/high output' farming and 'low input/low output' farming, and is clearly brought out in the findings from the 100 Sample. Table 5.22 shows that 57.5% of livestock farms in the sample had a stocking rate of less than 0.7 GLUs per acre (1.73 per ha) compared to 35% of dairy farms. 47% of dairy farms had stocking rates greater than 0.8 GLUs per acre (1.98 per ha) as against only 15% of livestock farms.

Table 5.22 Stocking Rate by Type of Farming, 100 Sample

Stocking Rate (GLUs per adjusted forage acre)	Type of Farm		
	Dairying	Livestock	Other
NA or NR	0	3	1
0.001-0.499	5	8	1
0.500-0.699	13	15	2
0.700-0.799	9	8	3
0.800-0.899	10	3	0
0.900+	14	3	2
Totals	51	40	9

The magnitude of the contrast between the two types of farming is clear from the tables and indicates a dualism in the agricultural structure, induced by specialisation, unknown in the earlier livestock rearing regime of fifty years ago. Dairying has evolved as an intensive farming system heavily dependent upon other sectors of the agricultural supply economy. The variable costs of Table 5.21 include such items as feeding stuffs, seeds, fertilisers, and use of contractors. The fixed inputs

include labour, machinery and rent. To give just one indication of the differences on the ground, mainly dairy farms of 80 hectares or under had machinery to the value of £373.4 per hectare at the close of the 1979/80 financial year compared to £213.6 per hectare for lowland cattle and sheep farms in the same size group (13). Furthermore the gap was widening - the value of machinery had increased by £13.3 per hectare in the year on the dairy farms but declined by £1.6 on the livestock farms.

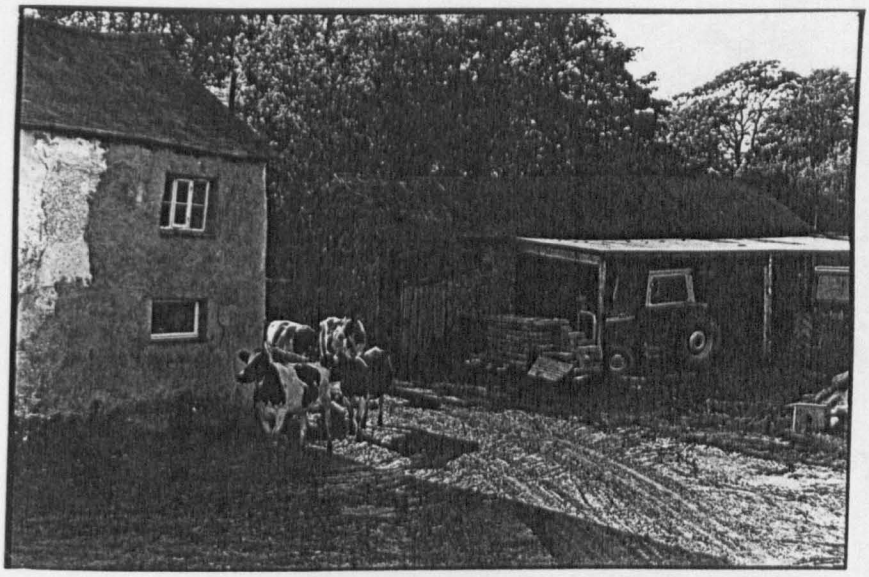
The decline in the machinery value on the livestock farms of under 80 hectares is perhaps a little misleading, for livestock farms of over 80 hectares registered an increase in value over the year of £20.7, compared to £18.1 for dairy farms of 80-120 hectares and £26.1 for dairy farms of over 120 hectares. This would appear to imply, and this of course is the logical conclusion from the net farm income figures, that the smaller livestock farms are no longer in an economic position to replace expensive farm machinery. Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no evidence that the smaller livestock farms made a greater use of contractors than the larger ones, an alternative path of commoditisation of labour and machinery inputs. It would seem that they are content to use older machinery and make replacements less often, implying something of a resistance to commoditisation. In the dairy sector there is a considerably greater use of contractors by producers on a smaller acreage. In spite of the higher machinery valuation on dairy farms, dairy farms also make a greater use of contractors than livestock producers. In the use of fertilisers too the contrast is great. Specialist dairy farms of under 40 hectares spent an average of £68.9 per hectare on fertilisers in 1979/80, compared to £35.6 for lowland cattle and sheep farmers with over 80 hectares.

The financial and technical differences between the two types of producer could be elucidated further, but it is important to turn instead to the reason for the development of these differences. Clearly if the profit maximisation motive is accorded primary attention many more livestock farmers should have been persuaded to shift into milk production than has been the case. In fact, as has been shown already, the reverse has occurred with dairy producers declining in numbers considerably more rapidly than livestock farmers. There are a number of reasons for this. In the first place the policies of the Milk Marketing Board have clearly led to a diminution in the number of dairy producers and a widening in the gap between dairy and livestock farmers' incomes. In the early 1950s there was not a great deal of discrepancy in net farm income per acre between dairying and livestock producers. In 1952 and 1953, for example, mixed livestock farms in Devon and Cornwall actually secured higher net farm incomes than mainly dairy farms (14). It was, however, more usual as the 1950s progressed for net farm income per acre on livestock farms to lag behind that of dairy farms, but the greater average acreage of farms in the livestock sector usually compensated for this.

In the early to mid 1960s, however, the seeds of the present discrepancies emerged more clearly despite the fact that the threat of surplus production of milk was perceived as more serious than that of beef or sheep. The strength of the dairy interest within the National Farmers' Union and the powers of the MMB meant that prices for milk continued to rise. Meanwhile the initial capital costs for entering milk production to achieve the required standards of buildings and equipment,

as well as the technical skills required to comply with the quality and disease regulations in milk production, effectively restricted entry to dairying. Perhaps the most dramtic of all the innovations fostered by the Board and finally, in the late 1970s, imposed on all producers was the collection of milk by bulk tankers as opposed to the collection of churns. Conversion to bulk handling of milk was assisted by MMB and MAFF grants and promoted by MMB premiums. But major capital investments were needed and not just in milking equipment.

Conversion to bulk production, as attested by a number of those interviewed, prompted many farmers to question seriously continuing expansion and specialisation in dairying with the concomitant investment in new buildings - cow kennels or yards in place of the traditional 'shippens' or cow sheds - and in tackle and buildings for silage making as opposed to the more traditional hay making. In the 1960s and 1970s those who chose to stay in livestock rearing or beef production often had these investment decisions in mind. Moreover producing for the Board demanded adherence to a degree of regulation of production and quality standards not found in livestock production. However the greater independence and freedom of livestock production has to be put against the benefits of the regular monthly milk cheque. In view of the expressive nature of job satisfaction in farming found elsewhere in the survey interviews it was surprising how many farmers, when discussing their farming regime, emphasised the attractiveness of the monthly milk cheque as an advantage of dairying. This has to be put alongside farmers' negative views on the nature of the work, both its quality and quantity, in dairying as opposed to livestock production.



Cows come in for evening milking.

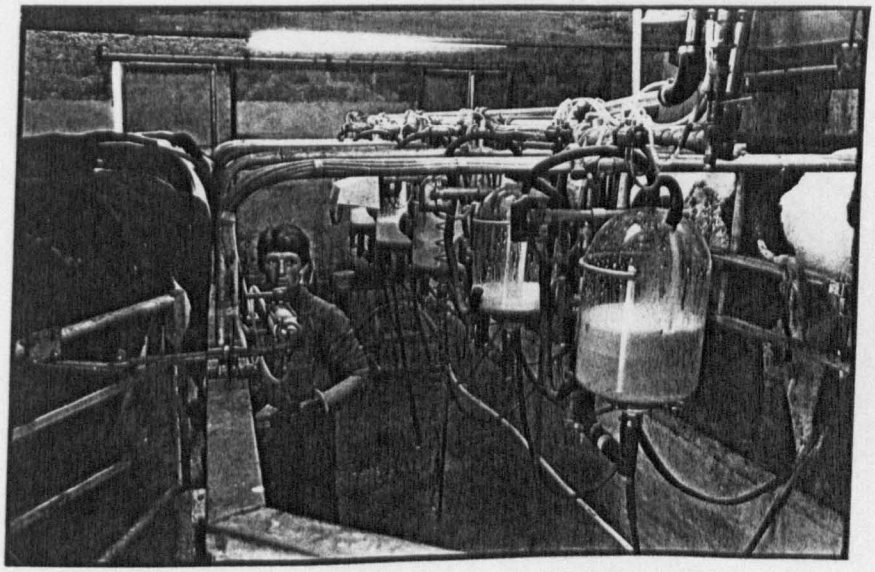
The ubiquitous black and white Friesians have now almost entirely replaced the traditional 'Ruby Red' Devons.

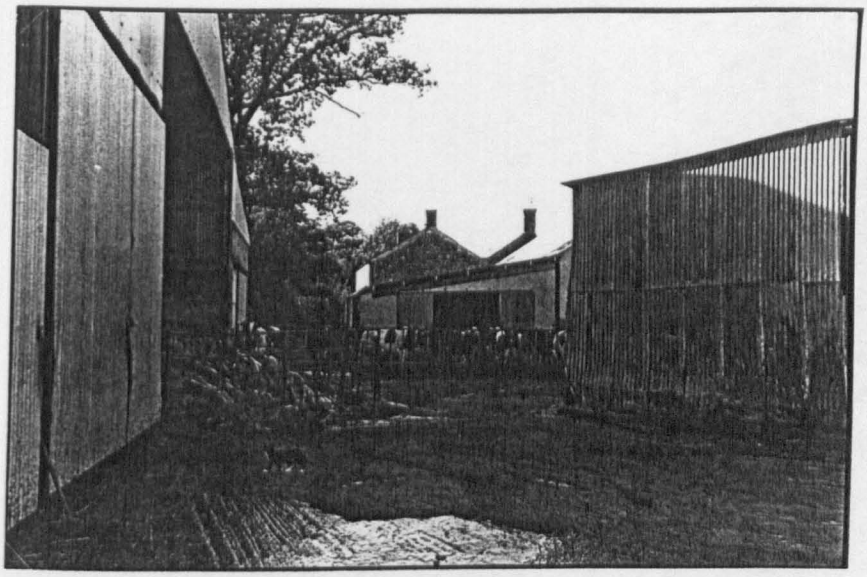
Overleaf - Dairying old and new.

Above - the female domain.
Women learn cheese making between the wars through the travelling County Council cheese school.

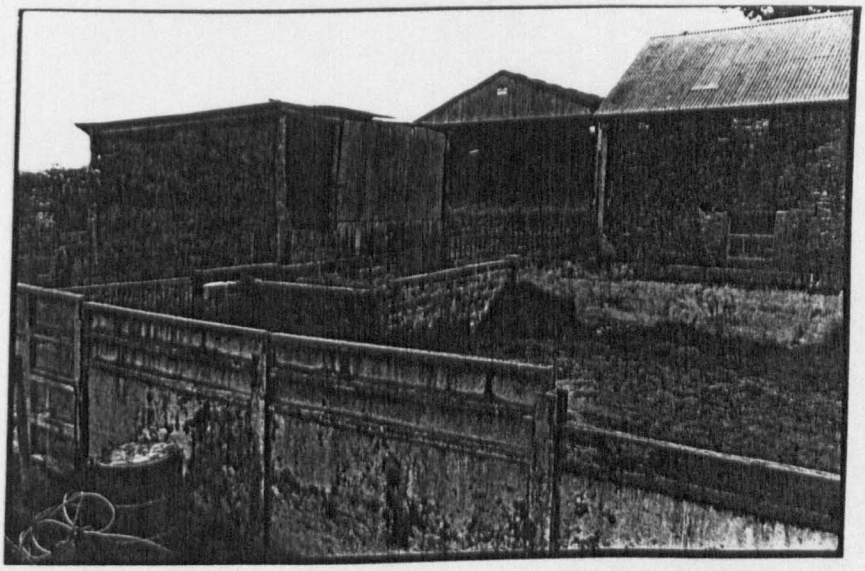
Below - Teenage Boy milks 70 cows single-handed, 1980s.

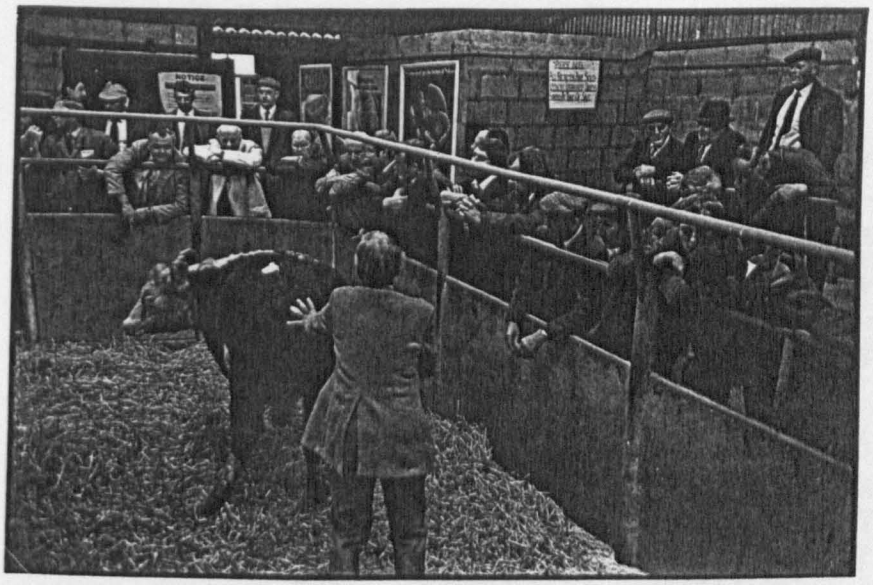

THE
DEVON COUNTY
CHEESE
SCHOOL



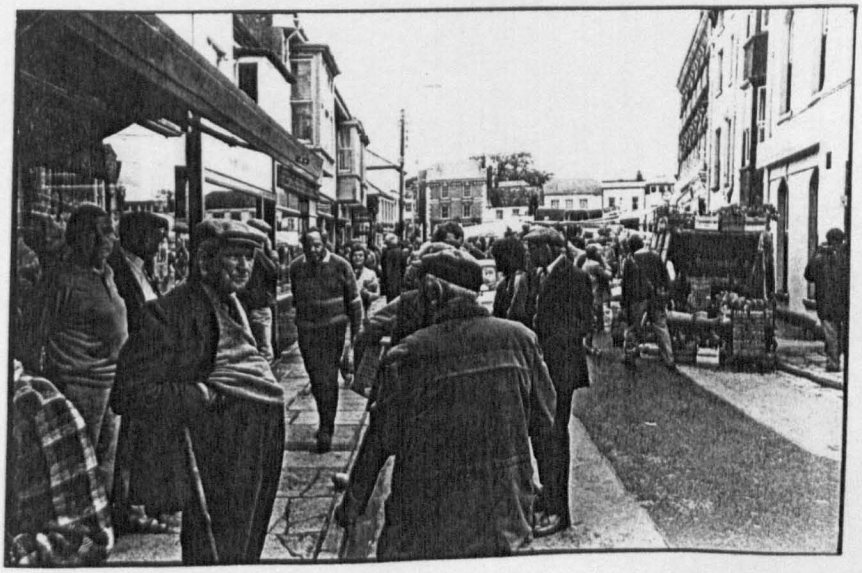


Contemporary Dairying. Note the juxtaposition of old and new buildings.





Market Day in Holsworthy.



It became overwhelmingly clear in the interviews that many farmers saw intensive dairying as a necessity rather than their preferred mode of farming. The work was seen as more arduous and demanding than the work with livestock. In spite of the high degree of technical ability required in dairying and the management skills necessary for the intensive use of grassland associated with milk production, in many farmers' eyes this was an inferior form of farming.

Apart from direct observations of this kind in the course of interviews these views were brought out in a number of questions which tapped the degree to which farmers believed in the virtues of traditional mixed farming and conservative husbandry. In one direct-approach question the farmers were asked if they considered themselves to be specialist or mixed farmers. 65% thought of themselves as mixed farmers as against 29% who considered themselves to be specialist (NR=6%). It was apparent from many farmers' responses that 'mixed' farming was seen as an aspect of 'good' farming. 'Mixed' was often taken as a self-ascribed virtue, a qualitative description of the kind of farmer a respondent felt himself to be irrespective of the actual commodity balance of the business. Thus one farmer producing only pigs answered the question as follows:

> Oh mixed. It's only a case of having to do this through ill-health; otherwise I would be in sheep and pigs still.

Similarly another beef and sheep farmer on a 240 acre all grass farm justified his answer to his wife:

> Farmer: Oh mixed I should think.
> Wife: Not really.
> Farmer: I am. I understand how to till a field of corn.

Another question asked respondents to describe themselves as either 'traditional' or 'modern progressive' farmers. In this instance a

majority (50%) felt themselves to be traditional, 17% claimed to be a mixture of both and 29% modern progressive (NR=4%).

The ideal of traditional mixed farming is linked particularly closely to livestock producers, around which clusters a whole set of values and ideological positions concerning the 'rights and wrongs' of farming. In the eyes of the more extensive livestock farmer 'good farming' is not 'dog and stick' farming, the term with which some intensive producers denegrate extensive farming. 'Dog and stick' farming implies a desire for ease and low input of labour and resources, and is linked particularly to the 'bad' times of the 1930s. 'Good farming', by contrast, involves the use of labour and resources to benefit the farm rather than for purely economic motives. 'Good farming' can perhaps be seen, to adopt a phrase from a different discourse, as ecologically sustainable. It is in contrast to 'flogging the land' or 'asset stripping', the derogatory terms used by some respondents to describe very intensive agriculture. In good farming considerable emphasis is placed on the virtues of 'tidy farming'; the need to maintain hedges and gate-ways in a traditional (and labour intensive) manner; the benefits of producing a small number of 'good' stock without over-stocking, sometimes still with the use of labour intensive traditional shippens for fattening of the 'best bullocks'.

The interest shown by many livestock farmers in regularly attending the local livestock market, to watch prices, exchange information and so forth, whether selling or not, is another example of the approach of many livestock farmers, whereby values other than strictly economic ones are in evidence (15). Dairy farmers do attend market - they will often

sell calves there - but if they are specialist dairy producers, selling their milk direct to the MMB, their interest in the market will be limited. But the higher "market orientation" of the livestock farmers should not be confused with the high level of market acumen implied in Newby's use of the term (16). Market orientation as involvement in the typical livestock auction market implies an orientation to a cultural nexus outside the farm with all that that implies beyond the purely economic or financial implications.

Dairy producers, forced to market through the MMB, are denied meaningful access to this nexis. Whatever the economic imperatives of dairy production the impact of political arrangments have shifted the cultural context of milk production. Gray, in looking at lamb auctions in the Scottish borders, takes Sahlins' conception of value as ambivalent, "referring to an economic phenomenon (monetary 'price') as well as to a cultural phenomenon (meaning)" (17). He refers to the geographical isolation of hill sheep work:

> hill sheep men experience some of the most central facets of their world as lone individuals on the hill. There are very few contexts in which groups of shepherds and/or farmers work together, when they can observe and judge their fellows' skills, ... Auctions, then, are events in which hill sheep men can together display and socially experience their distinctive world as embodied in the lambs. (18)

A similar case can be made with regard to livestock farmers in Devon. Especially as a result of the decline in communal working at harvest most family farmers in dairying or livestock production also live a relatively isolated work existence. No longer is good farming judged by peers during communal work activities - organised farm walks are but a pale shadow of these occasions - so markets assume an enhanced importance. However cultural value is not embodied purely in the stock

for sale - with milk producers this would not be possible - but also in the articulated views on other aspects of agriculture.

Good farming to the livestock producer therefore involves a combination of strictly economic or productionist criteria and cultural meaning. Thus other characteristics include suspicion over the use of chemical sprays on grassland, although in labour terms the trimming of pastures may be nearly as demanding. Furthermore, as shown above, the cultivation of small areas of cereals and even field vegetables and potatoes for home consumption are further characteristics of 'good' or 'traditional' farming, which point to the fact that the livestock option is not a leisure option in the sense of offering more free time. This point is made explicitly as a comment on the idea of a labour-leisure equilibrium prevalent in Chayanovian peasant economic analysis. The labour leisure choice is just one manifestation of economic decision-making within family enterprises. There is no prima facie reason why it should be more important than other 'choices' concerning the level, and more importantly the content, of productive activity. Indeed the crucial importance attached to leisure in these formulations suggests an 'ethnocentric' preoccupation with delineating labour and leisure not necessarily relevant to agrarian cultures (19).

A particularly revealing set of findings in this context was derived from a question on the respondents' understanding of "good farming". It was expected that a broad range of answers would result on a continuum from 'business' to 'way of life' approaches to farming. In fact this was not the case. Almost without exception farmers mentioned some aspect of good husbandry and the appearance of the farm. Few defined good farming

solely in terms of profitability and business efficiency. However a close interpretation of the responses showed that dairy farmers were, on the whole, more likely to add notions of profitability and efficiency to more traditional husbandry notions. A selection of the range of answers is given below:

> Well maintained tidy farm; can open every gate; a good stockman - that's the basis of his survival; and should also be an environmentalist, should have a lot of interest in the things of nature and shouldn't be sowing too much darn spray. (180 acre livestock farmer)
>
> Looking after his machinery and animals on the farm; hedges and ditches all trimmed up. (35 acre livestock farmer)
>
> Growing good crops, making best use of your land and keeping it tidy; hedges trimmed and gates swinging. (125 acre livestock farmer)
>
> Well it's difficult to say. I mean some would call a chap in market with a cow with a great big udder a good farmer. But go home to his yard and he might be up to his neck in shit. He's a man who keeps his weeds cut, has a tidy yard where he works, hedges and gates tidy, and ready to help his neighours. (170 acre livestock farmer)
>
> A good farmer is one who runs his own particular business well. If he runs a good business he has to be a good farmer. General appearance of place and stock a pretty good guide. (280 acre dairy farmer)
>
> Farm well trimmed up; drains in good order; cattle looking well; good quality milk; keeping out of trouble; and at end of day is making a profit. (100 acre dairy farmer)
>
> Efficent and good management; things done at the right time. (200 acre dairy farmer)
>
> Farming his ground and stock well - good crops; getting as much out of it as he can. (140 acre dairy farmer)

The results, given in Table 5.23, show that 57.5% of livestock farmers emphasised solely the more conservative characteristics of good farming, compared to 39% of dairy farmers. The notion of good farming is just one of a number of facets of the ideological make-up of contemporary family farmers with respect to farming practice and techniques. Views concerning the optimum size of farms, the importance of family as

opposed to hired labour, use of fertilisers and so on all combine to give a farming ideology firmly based in the traditional livestock rearing economy of thirty years or more ago. This is diluted, but rarely entirely lost, by specialisation and a higher degree of commoditisation and commercial orientation.

Table 5.23 Definitions of a "good farmer" by Farming Type.

Type of Definition	Type of Farm		
	Dairy	Livestock	Other
Progressive, profitable and productive + (in some instances) timely, tidy and good steward.	25	15	7
Timely, tidy and good steward (sole emphasis).	20	23	2
Other.	6	2	0

The argument developed thus far is that generally speaking dairy farmers are those farmers who have opted for a particular style of farming taking them on a continuum away from traditional livestock farming. There are, however, a number of problems with this approach. First the notion of a continuum implies that livestock farming is somehow the norm from which dairy farmers start, either by compulsion or choice. But we have already seen that dairy farmers have declined in number, so that the proportionate importance of the livestock producer has increased, hardly the mark of a laggardly and declining sector. Furthermore

specialist livestock production, especially of fatstock, is itself a relatively new phenomenon arising from the more mixed milk, pigs and livestock rearing type of farming characteristic of inter-war and early post-war years. Of course it is clear that that the specialist livestock farmer has much more in common with this traditional system of agriculture than does the modern dairy farmer, but it would be a mistake to assume that all contemporary livestock producers conform to the 'traditional' norms outlined above, especially if they are recent out-goers from the dairying sector.

Table 5.16 shows that a substantial minority of livestock producers (37.5%) do emphasise notions of profitability and progressiveness in their farming. This sector has not been immune from many of the technological advances in agriculture in the post-war period. While over-all profits may be lower on a number of livestock farms a higher than average farm size may compensate for this. But of far greater importance is the way in which the figures in Table 5.14 are arrived at. The contrasting financial circumstances of the two sectors are plain. However the net farm income figure is misleading. The costs used to calculate the figure for each sector do not include debt payments on loans. An imputed, and slightly varying, figure for rent is included for each sector but again this does not correspond to real rental payments which vary considerably between farmers. In other words the net farm income figure provides only a rough guide to the profitability of individual farm businesses. In fact the findings from the 100 Sample indicated that many livestock farmers, without debt, were more profitable than highly indebted dairy farmers. For many dairy farmers milk production represented the only way to maintain re-payments on

mortgages and bank loans. In other words what appeared initially as a cultural choice between highly differentiated commodity production regimes turns out to be structured much more fundamentally on economic conditions attached to the nature of agricultural production, particularly the role of land in farm production.

It is impossible from published results of the Farm Management Survey to draw conclusions concerning the impact of varying rental payments on farm financial structure. However the relationship between level of indebtedness and type of farming can be shown and this is demonstrated clearly in Tables 5.24 and 5.25. Using South West Farm Management Survey data these tables show the contrasting debt position of dairy and livestock producers. Long term loans include bank and agricultural mortgage corporation loans, and will usually have been made for the purpose of land purchase. Current liabilities include hire purchase arrangements, short-term loans and bank overdraft facilities. This debt will not usually include any direct payments for the land. Current liabilities are usually incurred on loans for capital investment and even defecits in trading.

Table 5.24 Total Current Liabilities + Total Long Term Loans 1979/80, £ per hectare) (20)

Tenure	Specialist & Mainly Dairy.	Cattle & Sheep	All Farms
Owner-Occupied	602.3	167.4	462.5
Tenanted	260.7	178.2	215.1
Mainly Owner-Occupied	432.7	322.1	376.2
Mainly Tenanted	357.7	186.1	332.9

It is clear from Table 5.24 that dairy farms have a greater debt burden than livestock farms. However this would mean very little if the assets, in terms of land, buildings, machinery, livestock and crops held by dairy farmers were much greater than those of livestock farmers. Are the liabilities and loans shown on paper real liabilities? In fact assets on dairy farms <u>are</u> somewhat greater than on livestock farms, but with the exception of tenanted farms the differences are far less than the differences between levels of liability. As a way of ensuring that the level of assets is taken into account when discussing liabilities a current ratio of assets to liabilities is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Current Assets X 100}}{\text{Current liabilities}}$$

The current ratios are given in Table 5.25, which confirms the degree to which dairy farms are more indebted than livestock farms, particularly in the owner-occupied and mainly owner-occupied sectors.

Table 5.25 Current Ratio, 1979/80 £ per Hectare. (21)

Tenure	Specialist & Mainly Dairy.	Cattle & Sheep	All Farms
Owner-Occupied	139.9	371.3	177.2
Tenanted	160.0	221.7	176.4
Mainly Owner-Occupied	171.9	327.2	205.8
Mainly Tenanted	159.5	222.4	170.6

In exploring the impact of debt in agriculture in the south-west Davies, Dunford and Nixon have emphasised the distinction between "non overdraft users" and "overdraft users". They suggest that each set has very different farming objectives, debt circumstances and consequent cash needs (22). Indebtedness can be associated with different aspects of farm investment in buildings, machinery or even on the trading account. However land purchases or servicing past land purchases can also be crucial apsects of the debt structure. Taking the cost of land purchase as a "capitalised form of rent" (23) it is possible to think of debt as similar in content to land-rent. This allows conceptual discrimination between different classes of owner-occupier as well as between tenants and owner-occupiers. The 'rental' position of a farmer who buys land on the open-market at current prices is obviously very different to that of the owner-occupier who has inherited his holding and has no mortgage debts to service.

An owner-occupying farmer who has borrowed heavily will be paying a far

higher rental equivalent in the early years than many tenants. However inflation and successive re-payments mean that this burden will decline until, when complete re-payment is made, 'rental' payments will cease altogether. Death may, if steps have not been taken to minimise liability for capital transfer tax, bring the inheritor back to a high payment position. This rental factor clearly influenced the type and intensity of farming in the sample. A number of farmers put the position very clearly. One farmer who had recently cut back from 60 to 50 cows explained his decision as follows:

> We want more time off and a second reason is that we've paid for the farm and we haven't got the heavy mortgage repayments. The farm's ours and we don't have to worry like when we first came, over the huge mortgage repayments.

Similarly another farmer explained his decision to withdraw from pig production:

> Us was got on our feet. Us had paid off our farm and us did work hard - the pressure was off a little bit.

Another 270 acre farmer, milking 45 cows and keeping beef and sheep, described himself as traditional rather than progressive in the following terms:

> Oh traditional. We're not progressive like some. If we had to pay rent would have to be more progressive, or if we had bought the farm. We would have to keep more cows then.

Thus the means by which a farm had been acquired and/or the extent of current rental payments become a crucial factor in influencing the type of farming and/or level of intensity. Only 22% of dairy farmers in the sample had inherited their farms compared to 42% of livestock farmers. 65% of dairy farms were acquired through tenancy or loans compared to 50% of livestock farms.

While these figures indicate a tendency the differences are not of

sufficient magnitude to allow any explanation of inter-farm differences to be based solely on rental payment. There are, in fact, a number of other factors which influence farming intensity and the dairy-livestock choice. Farm size, for example, can be an important factor. Clearly an inherited farm if especially small will need to be farmed intensively to support a family. Another important influence is the family development cycle. A number of the least intensive farms were those run by elderly farmers with no prospect of sons or daughters returning to the farm. The decision to abandon milking is often closely linked to the age of the producer and the likelihood of succession.

By contrast the return of a son to the farm, especially if married and requiring to support another family on the farm, can provide a powerful incentive to the intensification of farming. It was clear in a number of the cases studied that a decision to remain in or withdraw from milk production was premised to a large extent on the likelihood of offspring wishing to farm. This decision has been made all the more critical as it is no longer likely that farmers' sons will be able to earn an income through non land-based pig or poultry production, a common option twenty or thirty years ago. One final factor that derserves mention is that of education. Although the majority of the sample had received little specifically agricultural education it was apparent that in a few cases college-training had prompted intensive agricultural practices - programmes of draining or new buildings for example - which almost invariably necessitated milk production.

Thus the choice of farming and the financial and product structure of the farms are based on an interaction of three main elements - levels of

rent and/or indebtedness, farm size and position in the family development cycle. It is important to draw together some implications for the understanding of the commoditisation of agriculture. The most important of these is the conclusion that the peculiar nature of land in agricultural production has prevented the full commoditisation of the single most important means of production - land. This may seem a strange claim in view of the rapid growth of owner-occupation during the past thirty years and the market in agricultural land which has permitted this. This phenomenon has certainly led some observers to speak of the commoditisation of land (24). The establishment of owner-occupation, in the absence of land reform measures, clearly depends upon a land market. However the economic freedom implicit in such a land market also allows farmers to maintain occupancy of land for very long periods and, indeed, bequeath full ownership to the succeeding generation. Such owner-occupiers, paying neither rent nor mortgage payments, are insulated from the economic impact of full commoditisation. The high inflation rates of the seventies, and the even greater increases in land values during the same period, meant that farmers who were heavily indebted by land purchases in the fifties or sixties found themselves easily able to pay-off remaining debt by the late seventies.

In order for land to be fully commoditised it would be necessary for all farmers to pay a rent or rental equivalent, the level of which was determined by the productive potential of the land. Instead the growth of owner-occupation, and the immobility of the land market associated with that, mean that some farmers are prevented from acquiring land while others are insulated from full market laws by virtue of their

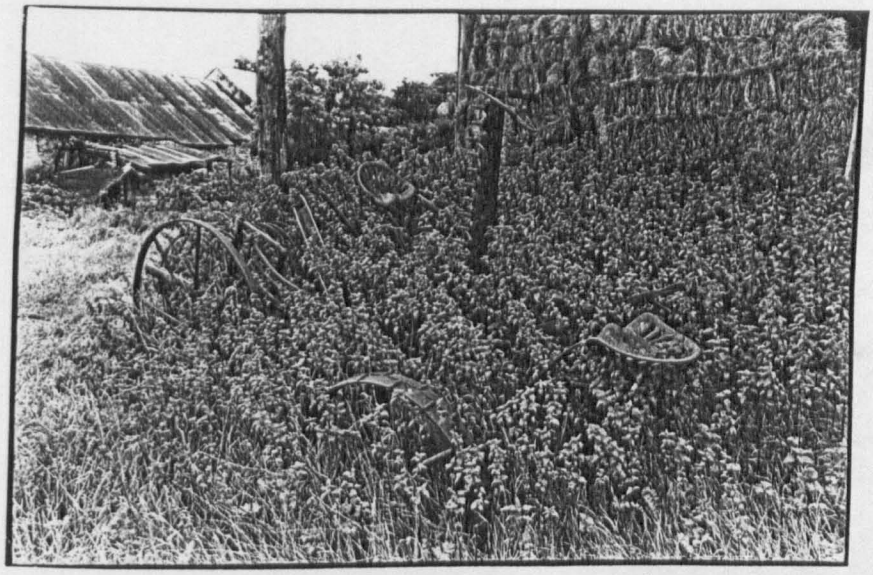
inheritance. Others, of course, are forced to pay more than the full value for land and face chronic cash shortage in the early stages of farm development (25). This barrier to the full commoditisation of land allows in some measure the diversity of farming practice described in this chapter. Perhaps the most striking example of the resistance to full commoditisation, which brings in both land and labour, is the case of the elderly childless farmer continuing to farm but at decreasing levels of intensity. 20% of the sample reported a constant or declining intensity of farming. The majority of these were elderly and had either no successors or none prepared to take over the farm. None paid rent or mortgage re-payments and several had pensions to supplement their farm earnings.

Before the advent of owner-occupation and secure tenancies most of these farmers would have been persuaded or compelled to pass on their tenancies to younger farmers. During the 1939-45 War and for the decade immediately after the war the County Agricultural Committees would have compelled farmers to maintain certain standards of husbandry. But elderly owner-occupiers in the 1980s not only have the freedom to modify their farming practice to suit their own circumstances but also are subject to fiscal forces which encourage only a very gradual withdrawal from agriculture. Even on a moderate size family farm the sale of total farm live and dead stock in one year is likely to take the farmer into a higher Income Tax bracket. Sale of land is likely to render the farmer liable to Capital Gains Tax. Therefore many elderly farmers choose to remain in farming gradually cutting back stock numbers and letting grass-keep on an annual basis. Proceeds from annual grass-keep sales are assessed as earned income as against rents from full agricultural

tenures, which counted, until 1985 changes, as unearned income.

By the same token the discussion of the impact of differing stages in the development of the family development cycle would seem to suggest the possibility of another barrier to full commoditisation, this time of labour. Friedmann suggests that the peaks and troughs of labour demands associated with the family development cycle are accommodated within simple commodity production by participation in the hired labour market. She suggests, as do Goodman and Redclift elsewhere, that the full commoditisation of labour characterises family farm production within capitalism (26). However it is clear from our analysis that resistance to the commoditisation of labour is assisted by insulation from land rent. An ageing farmer whose land is already paid for is not compelled to hire labour in order to maintain his level of production. An alternative strategy widely adopted is that of making major adjustments to the farming regime. Clearly there are barriers to the operation of a full labour commodity market.

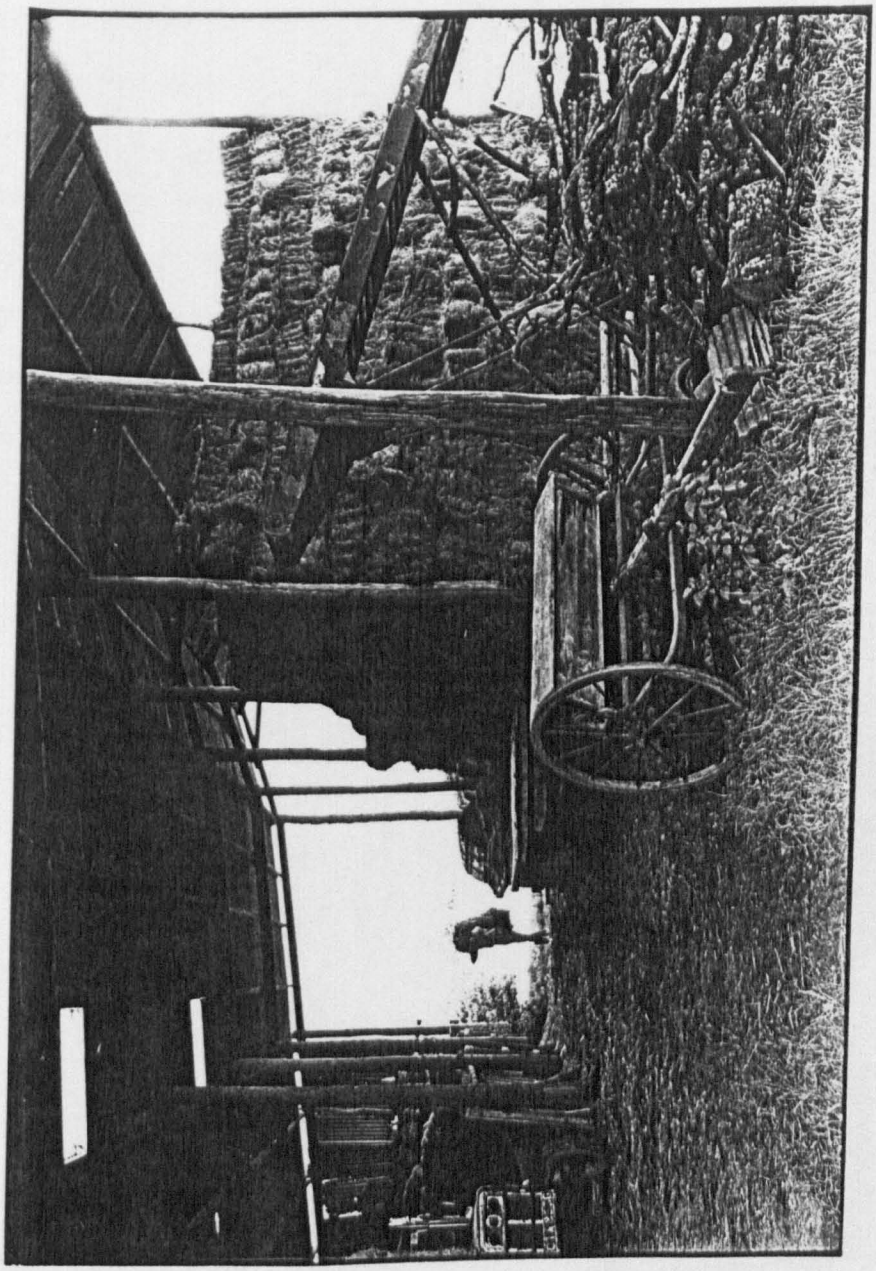
The coincidence of age and freedom from rental, debt or family pressures with the use of traditional farming methods can give the impression of a peasant core to the contemporary family farming community. The sale of such farms, on the death or retirement of the occupiers, to progressive young farmers or highly mortgaged incomers to the industry can be seen as tradition losing out to commercialism. But it as well to remember that many of these farmers were in their earlier days as commercial and 'modern' in their farming activities as any of their neighbours. A re-peasantisation if it has occurred has to be seen as a re-peasantisation of the individual in old age and is inter-twined with highly 'rational' fiscal planning considerations.



Overleaf - "Shed" or barn in Beaworthy.

Actively farmed in the 1960s and 1970s this farm is now mostly let for grass- keep. Already the contents speak of the 'past'.

Above - Outside the barn are reminders of an even earlier era.



Furthermore the process can be seen as a way in which use of land, conforming to the changing 'life needs' associated with ageing, comes to be seen as a consumption activity as opposed to a purely productive activity. The benefits of elderly farmers retaining an active interest in the land to 'give them an interest' and 'to keep them active' were pronounced by a number of farmers themselves and their own younger relatives. There is, of course, a parallel here with younger "hobby" farmers - the 'new peasants'? - although <u>their</u> activities are not usually seen in such a favourable light within the farming community. In conclusion unintended consequences of government measures affecting tenurial arrangements and taxation permit a resistance, even a rolling back, of the logic of commoditisation. The postponement of change can lead to sharp disjunctures in land use and farming intensity and the impact of commoditisation, but these can scarcely be seen as a re-emergence of 'peasant' farming. Rather there appear to be aspects of capitalism which themselves prevent full commoditisation. Contemporary family farming provides a picture of a diverse patchwork in more than just a spatial sense. To call 'old' farmers 'new' peasants demands a dangerous use of words unless we make clear again that peasant can only be seen as process.

FOOTNOTES

1. For details of the classification see Appendix 6.

2. On the sampling See Appendix 1.

3. AITCHISON, J.W. (1979) The agricultural landscape of Wales, Part 1. The structure of agricultural holdings 1964-74, Cambria, 6 (1), pp.32-53. p.39.

4. GASSON, R. (1982) Gainful Occupations of Farm Families, Wye College: School of Rural Economics.

5. On so-called "hobby farming" see LAYTON, R.L. (1978) The operational structure of the hobby farm, Area, 10 (4), pp.242-246; LAYTON, R.L. (1980) Hobby farming, Geography, 65 (3), pp.220-224. For a review of research on part-time farming see FULLER, A.M. (1984) Part-time farming: the enigmas and the realities, In Schwarzeller, H.K. Ed. Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Volume 1: Focus on Agriculture, Connecticut: JAI Press, pp.187-219.

6. GASSON, R. (1982) op. cit.

7. ibid.

8. FULLER, A.M. (1984) op. cit.

9. In recent years the importance of sheep in the economy has grown, especially after the introduction of milk quotas early in 1984. One of the emerging consequences of milk quotas has been a diversification of some dairy farmers into other commodities. A survey of 2,000 dairy farmers in England and Wales undertaken by the Milk Marketing Board has shown that between 1983/84 and 1985/86 the number of sheep on milk producing farms increased by 16%, pigs by 28% and poultry by 22%. Whether in the long term this immediate reaction to milk quotas will add up to a major reversal of the processes of specialisation discussed in this chapter remains to be seen. It is not clear from the MMB's published figures to what extent the expansion has been of existing enterprises rather than the establishment of new ones. See: MMB (1986) Quotas change the shape of dairy farming, Milk Producer, 33 (9), pp.24-25.

10. The calculations are based on data taken from AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS UNIT (1981) Farm Management Handbook, University of Exeter. For explanations of these terms see Appendix 6.

11. I know of no sustained discussion of commodity choice within agricultural economics. In rural geography what limited attention there has been has tended to adopt a behaviourist and "decision-making' approach. See for example ILBERY, B.W. (1978) Agricultural decision-making: a behavioural perspective, Progress in Human Geography,

2, pp.448-466.

12. The financial figures given here and over the following pages are for the farms in the Farm Management Survey in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset and are taken from AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS UNIT (1981) op. cit.

13. ibid.

14. MORRIS, S.T. LUXTON, H.W.B. and BEYNON, V.H. (1955) Farm Organisation and Incomes in South West England 1953, University of Bristol, Agricultural Economics Report No. 84.

15. See IRELAND, M.J. (1980) Rural Markets Past and Present in Devonshire: An Anthropological Approach to the Social, Economic and Political Aspects of Rural Markets in a Complex Society, Unpublished Dissertation available in Okehampton Public Library.

16. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) Property, Paternalism and Power, London: Hutchinson.

17. GRAY, J.N. (1984) Lamb auctions on the borders, European Journal of Sociology, 24, pp.54-82; SAHLINS, M. (1972) Stone Age Economics, Chicago: Aldine.

18. ibid. pp.64-65.

19. On the cultural determination of conceptions of work and leisure see MEAKIN, D. (1976) Man and Work: Literature and Culture in Industrial Society, London: Methuen.

20. AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS UNIT (1981) op. cit.

21. ibid.

22. DAVIES, G.D.D. DUNFORD, W.J. and NIXON, B.R. (1980) Bank lending to farmers - a measure in need of perspective, University of Exeter Farm Business Review, 6, pp.41-53.

23. Marx suggested this: "the price of land is nothing but capitalised and therefore anticipated rent". See MARX, K. (1974) Capital Volume 111, London: Lawrence and Wishart, p.808.

24. WHATMORE, S. (1986) Landownership relations and the development of modern British agriculture, In COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. Agriculture: People and Policies, London: George Allen and Unwin. pp.105-126.

25. A number of writers have touched on the implications of owner-occupation for rent theory, and this is explored further in chapter 8. On Marxist rent theory and owner-occupation see MASSEY, D. and CATALANO, A. (1978) Capital and Land, London: Edward Arnold; MURRAY, R. (1978) Modern landed property and rent, Part 2, Capital and Class, 4, pp.11-33; WINTER, M. (1984) Agrarian class structure and family farming, in BRADLEY, T. and LOWE, P. Eds. Locality and Rurality, pp.115-128. For

a suggestion that the rise of owner-occupation invalidates Marxist rent theory see DJURFELDT, G. (1981) What happened to the agrarian bourgeoisie and rural proletariat under monopoly capitalism? Some hypotheses derived from the classics of Marxism on the agrarian question, Acta Sociologia, 24 (3), pp.167-191; and for a rejoinder see WINTER, M. (1982) What happened to the agrarian bourgeoisie and rural proletariat under monopoly capitalism? A reply to Goran Djurfeldt, Acta Sociologia, 25 (2), pp.147-157.

26. FRIEDMANN, H. (1978) Simple commodity production and wage labour in the American Plains, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (1), pp.71-100; FRIEDMANN, H. (1980) Household production and the national economy: concepts for the analysis of agrarian formations, Journal of Peasant Studies, 7 (2), pp. 158-184; GOODMAN, D. and REDCLIFT, M. (1986) Capitalism, petty commodity production and the farm enterprise, In COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. Agriculture: People and Policies, London: George Allen and Unwin. pp.20-41.

Chapter 6

THE WORK SITUATION

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter concluded with a discussion of the nature of commoditisation vis-a-vis the diversity of farming in West Devon. The interaction of rent/indebtedness, size of farm and family development cycle was seen to be crucial in influencing the farm production process. The themes of diversity and resistance to commoditisation are explored further in this chapter, first by a consideration of the way in which labour is organised within the farm family enterprise, and secondly in a more wide-ranging discussion of labour ideology and mangement strategies. As already shown the hire of full-time workers is now the exception rather than the rule in West Devon. The majority of farms rely on the labour of the farmer and spouse, with perhaps an input from other members of the family. As well as farm family labour and hired labour the farmer may also have access to agricultural contractors and neighbourly assistance. As critical components of the farm family labour regime these are also discussed in the first section of this chapter.

FARM LABOUR FORCE COMPOSITION

Chapters 3 and 4 charted the rise of family labour farming in West Devon. Of particular importance to this was the decline in the use of hired labour, especially in the post-war period. Table 6.1 shows the contemporary composition of the farm labour force in the 41 Parishes compared to the position in Devon and in England and Wales. As a proportion of the total whole time farm labour force farmers, partners

and family members comprise 80% in West Devon compared to 75% for Devon as a whole and 58% in England and Wales. However, such a break-down of whole time workers ignores the contribution of part time and seasonal workers. It also excludes the contribution of farmers' or partners' spouse (usually wives) which although recorded is not broken down into whole or part time. Only those spouses who make a contribution to the labour requirements of the holding are intended to be included in the figure but there is no indication of the extent of their labour contribution. In an effort to overcome some of these difficulties attempts have been made to give weighted values to the contributions of part time and seasonal workers.

A study of Devon agricultural employment by the Dartington Amenity Research Trust valued part time workers at 0.5 of whole time workers and casual workers at 0.125 (1). The figures were derived intuitively and approved in discussions with local farmers, ADAS officers and farm management surveyors (2). Using the same weightings an estimate of the West Devon labour force has been provided in Table 6.2, which shows only a slight diminution in the proportionate significance of family labour in West Devon agriculture. However there are a number of problems with this approach. First, because the census does not discriminate between whole time, part time and seasonal/casual labour contributions <u>for spouses</u> it is impossible to include them in these calculations. This represents a considerable reduction in the potential size of the farm family labour force.

Table 6.1 Farm Labour Force Composition, June 1979.

Labour Category	West Devon	Devon	England & Wales
Whole Time Farmers or Partners	1,077	8,383	129,182
Part Time Farmers or Partners	289	2,287	40,269
Spouses of Farmers/Partners	488	3,601	52,735
Other Whole Time Partners/Directors	267	1,784	37,703
Other Part Time Partners/Directors	138	1,036	20,874
Spouses of Other Partners/Directors	32	234	4,787
Whole Time Male Family Workers	140	1,203	19,297
Whole Time Female Family Workers	33	213	3,408
Part Time Male Family Workers	68	419	7,368
Part Time Female Family Workers	20	288	5,081
TOTAL FARMERS, PARTNERS, FAMILY	2,552	19,488	320,704
Salaried Managers	9	176	7,165
Whole Time Male Hired Workers	345	3,501	121,157
Whole Time Female Hired Workers	15	236	11,500
Part Time Male Hired Workers	117	861	16,416
Part Time Female Hired Workers	32	429	23,181
Seasonal/Casual Male Hired Workers	225	2,407	45,611
Seasonal/Casual Female Hired Workers	25	594	37,446
TOTAL HIRED	559	8,028	255,311
TOTAL WHOLE TIME LABOUR	1,886	15,496	329,412
TOTAL PART-TIME & CASUAL LABOUR	1,434	12,156	253,769
TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	3,320	27,652	583,181

Table 6.2 Weighted Composition of West Devon Labour Force.

Farmers, Partners & Directors, Family *	1,774.5	(79.2%)
Hired Labour (including managers)	464.75	(21.8%)
TOTAL	2,239.25	

* Nb. excluding spouses.

Secondly the figures used by Dartington were derived in the context of the hired labour sector. Our analysis uses the same weightings for application to family as well as to hired labour. It is important to subject such an assumption to more critical scrutiny. Finally as already indicated in the introduction to this chapter there is need to consider labour contributions from outside the 'formal' labour force; to look at the role of agricultural contractors, neighbourly help and communal working. Clearly these problems have to be looked at in the context of the more detailed labour data available from the 100 Sample. Only 17 of the 100 Sample now employ whole time hired workers and a further 12 employ part time workers. Of the 71 worked solely by family labour one third (29) had employed workers in the past.

Table 6. 3 shows the labour force composition of the 100 Sample compiled in such a way as to allow a reasonably close comparison with the data derived from the Agricultural Census. There are a number of ways in which the compilation of Table 6.3 differs to that of Table 6.1. Farmers' spouses have only been included if there is evidence of a real input to physical farm work. It is possible that some of those included as 'workers' under the June returns do not make such a contribution,

especially spouse who have been made partners in the business for tax reasons.

Table 6.3 Farm Labour Force Composition, 100 Sample.

Whole Time Farmers or Partners	110	(108)
Part Time Farmers or Partners	28	
Spouses of Farmers/Partners	66	
Whole Time Male Family Workers	15	
Whole Time Female Family Workers	2	
Part Time Male Family Workers	27	
Part Time Female Family Workers	8	
TOTAL FARMERS, PARTNERS, FAMILY	256	(254)
Salaried Managers	0	
Whole Time Male Hired Workers	38	(25)
Whole Time Female Hired Workers	31	(0)
Part Time Male Hired Workers	14	
Part Time Female Hired Workers	1	
Seasonal/Casual Male & Female Hired Workers	22	
TOTAL HIRED	106	(62)
TOTAL WHOLE TIME LABOUR	196	(150)
TOTAL PART-TIME & CASUAL LABOUR	166	
TOTAL LABOUR FORCE	362	(316)

Table 6.3 makes no distinction between "principal" farmers/partners and "other" partners. A further possible discrepancy is the inclusion of

"casual" family workers, for which there is no category in the MAFF figures, within the part time category. It is not clear how the Census treats this type of worker, if at all, and it seems likely that they are under-recorded. One final point is that the importance of the hired labour force in the 100 sample is exagerated by the inclusion in the Sample of one very large capitalist dairy and poultry farm. This farm employs no less than 13 of the 38 whole time male hired workers and all 31 of the whole time female hired workers. Figures for the Sample excluding this one farm are given in brackets in the Table. Removing this farm from the analysis gives a revised labour force composition which is almost identical to that indicated in the figures for the 41 Parishes. Farmers and family comprise 80.4% of the total labour force and 83.3% of the whole time labour force.

In order to understand more clearly the use made of labour in the 100 Sample information on other sources of labour was gathered and in addition the labour profile of each farm was drawn up. First the use of contractors and neighbourly help was examined. Table 6.4 shows the extent of contractor use amongst farmers in the 100 Sample. It is apparent that the use of contractors is by no means confined to the smallest farmers unable to purchase machinery, although certain contracting tasks are widely used by smaller farmers. It was clear from the interviews that contracting itself is a highly diverse undertaking, ranging from a relatively informal, only partially commercialised, form of neighbourly help through to 'big-business' commercial contracting. There is a continuum between purely reciprocal neighbourly or kin help through to fully fledged contracting. However this is not a simple 'modernisation' or 'rationalisation' continuum on which all farmers can

be located, for the same farmer will be located at different points of the continuum for different tasks. Silage making may demand the use of a fully commercial contractor, hay making the use of reciprocal neighbourly help and combine-harvesting the semi-commercial contracting of a neighbour.

Table 6.4 Use of Contractors by Farm Size, 100 Sample.

Frequency of use of Contractor	Farm Size Category (Acres) Under 50	50-99	100-249	Over 250
Never	5	0	3	3
Rare	1	6	8	7
Regular - small tasks	5	13	18	4
Regular - big tasks	4	8	10	5

Although it would be a mistake to see an exclusively 'ethnic' localism at work here - some newcomers can be rapidly absorbed into local networks - a higher proportion (64%) of those born more than 50 miles from their farm received no neighbourly help than for the remaining locally born farmers (37%). Most of the 44% of farmers who received no neighbourly help at all made regular use of contractors. However evidence that the two types of input are not mutually exclusive is provided for by the fact that of the 54 (NR=2) receiving occasional or regular help from neighbours 32 also made use of contractors for certain tasks. Nor is the use of contractors confined to the bigger high-input farmers. Many of the smaller lower-input farmers also perceived advantages in using contractors, both in saving on labour and machinery

purchase. For example:

> I've got no ties. The property is mine - there's no mortgage to it and no bank over-draft. And I've found, particularly in the last two or three years, that it's better to have the contractors in. It saves me employing that extra man and the interest you would have to pay out on the machinery virtually pays the contractor. (150 acre dairy farmer)

A more crucial aspect determining the use of contractors appears to be the availability of other family labour. Table 6.5 shows the relation between the use of contractors and the labour input available to the farmer and his wife from their own children.

Table 6.5 Use of Contractors by Child Labour Input, 100 Sample.

Frequency of use of Contractor	Extent of Child Labour Input		
	None or Less than 10 Hrs per week.	10-60 Hrs per week.	Over 60 Hrs per week
Never	7	1	3
Rare	10	7	5
Regular - small tasks	30	9	1
Regular - big tasks	20	6	1

Whereas no clear relationship between farm size and use of contractors could be demonstrated a relationship can be shown here. 75% of those making minimal use of their off-spring's labour regularly used contractors compared to only 20% of those with a regular input of off-spring's labour of over 60 hours a week. Here the use of contractors is clearly related to the position in the family development cycle and critically to the availability of family labour. Not only will farmers with sons working at home make less use of contractors they may even enter contracting themselves as one means of increasing income.

Contracting offers an opportunity for extra income to be earned by a farm family during that point in its development cycle when labour is most abundant, and in addition a way of spreading the capital cost of new equipment. Of course the option is open only to those with the necessary tackle to perform the tasks required. Thus the supply and the use of contracting services resembles the use of farmers' sons as temporary farm labourers commented on by a number of writers and prevalent in Devon during the last century (3).

The use of neighbourly help by farmers is another means by which labour peaks, either seasonal or cyclical, can be overcome. Although a majority participate in this for many it has become relatively infrequent and the significance in labour terms is far less than that of contracting. Nevertheless it is sufficiently important to have a bearing, in some instances, on the use of contractors. Of those farmers using contractors for big tasks 60% never made use of neighbourly help. The corresponding figure for those farmers not using contractors on a regular basis was only 33%. It is tempting to draw a sharp distinction between contracting and neighbourly help, and to suggest that the use and giving of neighbourly help is a symbolic celebration of kinship and localism, with the growth of contracting a formal commoditisation of such relations. But, especially for small tasks, the distinction between contracting and neighbourly help is blurred. Sometimes, for example, the element of contracting provides the balance above and beyond the level at which reciprocation of neighbourly help ceases. The implications for labour commoditisation of such complicated processes are crucial. In a number of ways the full commoditisation of labour is limited. It is clear that the use of neighbourly help, and that element of contracting which is

not fully commercial, restricts commoditisation. Use of contractors does not necessarily imply a susbsumption to capital. There is an essential ambiguity, or perhaps diversity, about the relationships between farmers and contractors. Some contractors are perhaps little more than workers owning minimal tackle. Others are large capitalist operators owning considerable capital value in terms of machinery, and running, in some instances, much larger businesses than their clients.

There is also a resistance to full labour commoditisation in quite another way. As indicated in the last chapter a number of farmers, at a late stage in the family development cycle, chose as a response to their own reduced labour capability to adapt their farming methods often by lowering farming intensity. By contrast younger farmers, with higher labour potential, might increase their own self-exploitation to quite an extraordinary extent. Those in the middle stage of the family development cycle, awaiting the return of sons to the farm, might use a combination of both tactics. This is not just a reluctance by some to employ labour and so save costs. The loss of potential income on low-input farms, for example, would almost invariably be more than made good if labour was employed. Rather there is a commonly felt resistance to the notion of employing hired labour at all.

A number of farmers cited the cost of labour, the "red-tape" and "paperwork", and "bureaucracy" as powerful disincentives to employing. Others, with no experience of employing workers, were clearly daunted by the prospect - nervous about embarking on such a course of action. Many preferred to "get-by" with a combination of hard-work, use of contractors, neighourly help if "in a real fix", neglect of

non-essential tasks and the adoption of more expensive labour-saving technology. It would be a mistake to see such a resistance to commoditisation as solely "irrational", self-employed traditionalism, although clearly some resistance to employing is important in many cases. For there are also those who might wish to employ, until a son is available to work on the farm, but the prospect of redundancy payments acts as a very real economic disincentive to employing. In this case labour commoditisation is limited by exclusion rather than by resistance.

The necessity, to simple commodity production, of a structural "reserve-army" of hired labour to plug the gaps left in the family development cycle as developed by Friedmann is only true in a very general sense in the complicated pattern of contemporary family farming in West Devon. Rather more diverse labour sources and alternatives to employing labour allow resistance to commoditisation. The peculiarities of the land market under owner-occupation, the insulation of land from full commoditisation, permit a greater flexibility in the labour regime of the farm. In addition the level of mechanisation in contemporary family farming also allows more flexibility in labour use and has promoted the expansion of alternative labour sources, particularly contracting. In both contracting and neighbourly help it is difficult to draw a line between use of an outside machine and use of outside labour. Whereas neighbourly help in the past consisted almost entirely of the provision of labour in communal operations such as hay-making and sheep-shearing this has largely been superseded by occasional help of a neighbour plus machine, for example in the provision of an extra trailer at hay harvest. Notwithstanding the diversity of farming in terms of

size, intensity, and so forth, the levels of technology used in British agriculture are now remarkably uniform. Few farmers, however 'traditional' they may appear in other ways, have failed to adopt the standard complement of techniques for hay-making, harvesting, cultivating and so forth. Of the 100 Sample only one farmer using a farm horse was encountered. In sharp contrast with many parts of Europe even the smallest farmers in West Devon bale their hay.

Thus borrowing, contracting, neighbourly assistance, are all crucial to the farming economy. The borrowing and lending of machinery is very common with 72% of farmers claiming to make occasional or regular loans of machinery and 48% to borrow. The inference from the difference between the two figures, and a common assertion among the farmers, is that some farmers are more frequent borrowers than others, although a reluctance to admit being a borrower might also be part of the explanation! More formal arrangments were less common - only 14% of the sample co-owned any tackle with a neighbour or relative. Only three farmers were involved in the formal hiring of machinery. This range of reciprocal arrangements, normally seen as the hallmark of a traditional peasant farming economy, has thus been adapted to fit the new requirements of a modern highly technological mode of farming. These various strategies can be seen as a means of resistance or exclusion to the full commoditisation of labour, and a resistance to the full commoditisation of farm machinery inputs. But it is a resistance based on the entirely 'rational' aim of reaping the advantages of modern technology without becoming too fully subsumed to the requirements and demands of capital.

In view of developments, both in technology and enterprise specialisation, it is not surprising that the role of women on the farms has also changed. The contribution of the farmer's wife through the control of small pig and poultry enterprises has been largely superseded. As Bouquet has also shown, for the north Devon parish of Hartland, technical change in the dairy sector has diminished the role of women in milk production too (4). At the same time the decline in hired labour necessitates a female input to specific labour processes, albeit as a relatively minor adjunct to her chief tasks in domestic reproduction (5). Thus in the 100 Sample 64 farmers' wives had some involvement in physical farm work but only 20 had specific enterprise responsibilities, calf rearing now being a more common task than pig or poultry keeping. As Table 6.6 shows the estimated farm labour input of farmers' wives exceeded 20 hours a week in only ten cases (6).

Table 6.6 Wife's Labour Input, 100 Sample.

Hours per Week	Number
0	26
1-10	35
11-20	19
21-40	10
NA	10
TOTAL	100

The same calculations for the input of children's labour, where, of course, more than one child may be involved are shown in Table 6.7. The Table shows that a majority of farmers do make use of their off-springs' labour.

Table 6.7 Child's Labour Input, 100 Sample.

Hours per Week	Number
0	25
1-10	29
11-20	8
21-40	0
40-60	15
60+ (more than one child)	10
NA (no children)	13
TOTAL	100

Whereas the overwhelming majority of wives were partners in the farm business and received no special wages for farm work undertaken, the position with children was much more variable. On thirteen farms, sons were partners in the business. In 33 cases where children, often still at school, worked on a part-time or seasonal basis pocket-money was paid. Of the remaining full-time children on the farm five received a basic wage, five below the basic and three below the basic with the use of some land or buildings on the farm for their own enterprise. The majority of farmers, with male heirs, expected their sons to work on the farm and eventually inherit to the holding, although most felt an obligation to leave cash to other non-inheriting off-spring, especially

daughters, possibly leaving an inheriting son with such payments to make. Another valuable source of labour to younger farmers without children old enough to work can be retired, or semi-retired, parents or even other elderly members of the family. A farmer retaining an interest, through an involvement in every-day farm work, in a farm handed over to his son is by no means uncommon.

The picture which emerges of the labour use on family farms is thus complicated. The farmer has recourse to a number of labour sources and means by which the need for labour can be reduced. The full commoditisation of labour is far from complete and in a number of ways characteristics of contemporary family farming actually seem to exhibit greater resistance to, or exclusion from, commoditisation than at an earlier period. The complicated picture is largely a result of the fact that the high labour inputs of former years are no longer needed on modern farms. The one-man farm, once a rarity, has become common, but a farmer frequently needs to supplement his own labour seasonally and for jobs where more than one pair of hands are required.

In spite of the range of use made of contractors, neighbours, members of the family, and hired workers, one factor is far less variable - the input of the farmer himself. In 81% of cases the farmer worked full-time on his farm, and in a further six cases more than 20 hours a week. Thus the average farmer works for most of the time on his own but is highly dependent on the success of various strategies by which his labour can be supplemented. Looking at the labour profile of each farm, the use made of sons, contractors, hired workers, and so forth, we find that in 43 cases the farmer himself is the sole whole-time worker on the

holding. Out of the remaining 57 farms it should be remembered that 17 were farms where the farmer himself did not work whole-time on the holding. In 40 cases then the farmer himself is accompanied by a full-time worker, either family or hired. Considering the small size of most farms, this is perhaps a fairly high figure and it should also be remembered that in the overwhelming majority of cases the labour input of a whole-time farmer will be far in excess of the input of a hired worker - perhaps more than a third as much again. Many farmers, especially in the early to middle stage of the family development cycle will regularly work 60-70 and even 80-90 hours a week. And where whole-time sons provide the additional labour they themselves might well be partners, and consider themselves as 'farmers', as well. The centrality of 'the farmer' as the main source of labour in contemporary family farming is hard to exaggerate.

WORK SATISFACTION

The importance of the farmer in the labour process raises a number of questions about the views of farmers about labour questions and their role within the labour process. Answers were sought to questions on labour relations, and the nature of work and on the likes and dislikes of farming. Levels of work satisfaction, notwithstanding the long hours of work, were high. Most of the 100 Sample expressed extrememly high levels of job satisfaction. Indeed only one farmer was unable to mention any particular aspect of farming which was a particular source of job satisfaction to him. In view of the predominance of family-worked farms on which the farmer himself took a leading role in all aspects of the

day to day management and working of the farm enterprise, it is scarcely surprising that factors such as the variety of farm work, the independence and freedom of being self-employed, and satisfaction in the intrisic qualities of husbandry, figure high on the list of 'likes', as shown in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 Most Valued aspects of the Farming Occupation.

What do you like in particular about farming?	
Born and Bred to Farming	26
Husbandry	37
Variety	27
Independence/Freedom	39
Outdoor/Country Life	40
Stewardship/Service	2
Business Success/Challenge	3
Money	5
Total	179*
Non Respondents	1

*Nb. Total is greater than 100 as most farmers gave more than one reply.

Some farmers' involvement in farming was so complete and deep-rooted that, at the same time as expressing deep satisfaction with their work, they felt unable to cite any specific factor leading to their satisfaction. Such farmers, instead, strongly articulated a commitment to something to which they were 'born and bred', a way of life without

an alternative. For example:

> I've never known anything else. My roots are in farming. I wouldn't like to pull up my roots andd try anything else. You get to know the ins and outs. Not having experience outside, I don't know anything else. (370 acre livestock farmer)

However most farmers combined such sentiments with other expressions of intrinsic satisfaction. To take another example:

> I suppose I'm a natural farmer. There's been no other life for me, and I've always enjoyed farming. I like animals, and don't like them presented badly. I try to always top the market. Farming's a gift isn't it? The one above He made me a farmer, and that's the only life I've wanted. (100 acre dairy farmer)

In many cases a combination of independence, satisfying aspects of husbandry, and the variety and 'out of doors' quality of farm life provide a powerful mix of sentiments, as shown in the following examples:

> I suppose I like being my own boss. I like the open air. I like to see that I'm achieving something - if you plant a crop and you look after it well and you come to an end and you get a good crop you feel you've done something. It's the same with animals - everything you do is trying to improve them. Also I like being at home every day. (240 acre dairy farmer)

> Open air, and a fresh job as the seasons go round. (150 acre livestock farmer)

> Rearing (cattle) I like, and outdoor open air life and seeing things grow. (50 acre livestock farmer)

> Being self-employed, one's own boss. It's a varied life. Get a satisfaction rearing cattle and seeing crops grow. (106 acre dairy farmer)

> Country life - the environment. Satisfaction of one's own achievements and working at one's own pace. I wouldn't change my job for anything. (100 acre dairy farmer)

Of central significance is the importance attached to particular aspects of husbandry and the work process itself. However not all work tasks are mentioned as satisfying. Two particular broad areas of agricultural work are mentioned affirmatively - crop growing and livestock rearing. This is interesting, because one of these, the cultivation of arable crops,

is in no way central to the everyday activities of many of the farmers in the 100 Sample. In terms of acreage and economic significance arable farming is limited in the Holsworthy area. Livestock rearing is, of course, more important but as an expression of satisfaction in farming it is expressed commonly by dairy farmers as well as livestock farmers, and is used to refer to the pursuance of high livestock standards rather than the general nature of a particular type of farming. Thus a dairy farmer will refer to the rearing of good dairy heifers, rather than dairy production per se. Performance in the livestock auction market is accorded more importance, by some dairy farmers, than milk yields. For livestock farmers, again, it is breeding good animals to 'top the market' which can be crucial. Thus, as indicated in the discussion of 'good farming' in the previous chapter, there is a social aspect to likes and dislikes in farming. The question is tapping, not only the ideologies surrrounding the nature of work, but also farming as a social activity, in particular in relation to famers' participation in local auction markets.

What is perhaps most striking from the results given in Table 6.8 is the low priority attached to notions of stewardship, business success or entrepreneurship and financial success. The findings are broadly consistent with those of Newby et al (7), although there are some interesting contrasts. In the Suffolk study two samples were used - one of a group of large farmers with over 1,000 acres and one of a sample of all full-time farmers in 44 parishes. This latter sample was composed of smaller farms than the 1,000+ Sample but larger farms than the 100 Sample. Newby et al draw out a number of comparisons between the two samples. In particular members of the 1,000+ Sample were more likely to

cite instrumental satisfactions than those in the 44 parishes, where expressive satisfactions, such as husbandry and variety, were more common. This distinction originates in work by Goldthorpe (8), where instrumental work is seen as being primarily a means to ends external to the work situation, usually, but not exclusively, financial. Expressive satisfaction is work satisfaction derived from intrinsic qualities of the work itself.

Thus in the 1,000+ Sample 41% of farmers cited instrumental reasons, compared to 31.6% of farmers in the 44 parishes. In particular less emphasis was attached to risk and to entrepreneurship in the 44 parishes (only 5.3% of farmers), which is in line with the 3 respondents from the 100 Sample, who emphasised the pleasures or challenges of business succcess. It should be noted that Newby et al include independence as an instrumental charateristic, along side entrepreneurship and money. Using this as the basis for analysis the instrumental/expressive breakdown of replies from the 100 Sample is as follows. 47% of farmers cited instrumental factors and 152% expressive factors (nb. a number cited more than one factor). At first sight the figure of 47% seems rather high and against the expectation arising from an extension of Newby et al's analysis. However the 100 Sample gave a higher average number of replies per farmer than in either of the Suffolk samples. Thus when we look at the ratio of expressive to instrumental replies the discrepancy is not so great. Expressive factors are in fact more important in all three samples by ratios of 4:1 in the 44 parishes, 3.44:1 in the 1,000+ Sample and 3.2343:1 in the 100 Sample.

The fact that the ratio is lowest among the smaller family farms of West

Devon, albeit to a small extent, is probably due to the rather mixed nature of one characteristic - 'independence'. The other instrumental characteristics (money and entrepreneurship) are cited far less frequently by members of the 100 Sample than by their counterparts in Suffolk. Independence, on the other hand, seems to be far more frequently cited in West Devon than would be expected if it were regarded purely as an instrumental characteristic alongside money and entrepreneuership. In fact independence is frequently linked by respondents to other expressive factors, as indicated in some of the quotations given above. Certainly it is hard to question the depth of the expressive orientation of farmers who cite independence alongside variety, the outdoor life, and/or husbandry factors. The problem for analysis is that notions such as 'freedom' and 'independence', based on the nature of self-employment, can form part of very different ideological constructions. Thus for one of the 1,000+ Sample independence is linked to much wider notions of planning and entrepreneurial activity. Independence as a satisfying facet of the work situation is obviously linked to some degree of control and authority within a business environment:

> Independence. I enjoy running the business and planning the work. You get a sense of achievement. (9)

Contrast this with the response from a farmer in the 100 Sample who had progressed from being a farm worker for fifeteen years to having his own small farm:

> I like the open air life. As regards my own place I wanted to be my own boss. I didn't want to work for someone else for evermore. (70 acre dairy farmer)

Clearly in this example independence is linked more to the worker's desire for control over his own work process than to the managerial

satisfactions of the bourgeoisie. I would suggest that the reason for the importance attached to independence among so many of the 100 Sample is the 'nearness', which so many of them feel, either through personal experience or kinship and friendship links, to the rural working class. This is in contrast with even the 44 parishes Sample in Suffolk, and is dealt with in greater detail in later discussions of the class position of family farmers.

Bearing in mind the work organisation and pattern of most family farmers it is not surprising that a few farmers noticed the contradiction between notions of freedom and independence and the demanding nature of their own work positions. The response to the question on the most valued aspects of farming of one part-time farmer, who spent two days a week as a manual worker elsewhere, in discussion with his wife who was also heavily involved in the farm work, is a good example:

> Husband: I've asked that question myself sometimes and I'm darned if I can answer, not to give ye a specific answer. No I really couldn't give an answer.
> Wife: Freedom.
> Husband: Freedom my foot - you're tied to a cow's tail. It involves so much doesn't it. Bound to be a certain amount of satisfaction isn't there. What would you say (to wife)?
> Wife: After working from nine to five for eight years, freedom to do just as you like when you like. You're not tied to anything or anybody.
> Husband: Well yes you be to a certain amount to they cows.
> Wife: There's nothing to say you've got to milk them at half past eight in the morning and nine o'clock at night.
> Husband: No, no that's true. Freedom, satisfaction, satisfaction of harvesting and, especially myself, doing a proper job. But you wouldn't say you do it from the money point of view not on a small acreage. (40 acre dairy farmer)

The importance of freedom and independence as goals to attain, as part of a petit bourgeois ideology, is obvious here, as well as the semi-proletarianised or contradictory class location of some of the

smaller producers (10). Nevertheless this contradictory aspect of freedom is as much a feature of the position of the farm family in the development cycle of the family group as of any fixed class determination. The notion of freedom may appear illusory to farmers at an early stage in the cycle, for example the case above, whereas later the work load may be eased by sons' or daughters' help on the farm. Thus only a minority of farmers joined the above farmer in citing 'the tie of farming' as a disadvantage of farming. Indeed as Table 6.9 shows, 41% of the 100 Sample were not able to cite any aspect of farming which they particularly disliked.

Table 6.9 Least Valued Aspects of the Farming Occupation.

What Aspects of Farming do you like least?	
Specific farming tasks	18
Farming as a tie - no break, long hours	14
Bad weather	15
Economic Pressure/Low Returns	14
Office Work	4
Politics/Bureaucracy/Interference	6
Nothing/No dislikes	41
Total	112*
Non Respondents	1

*Nb. Some farmers gave more than one reply.

This is a considerably higher proportion than in Newby et al's samples

(17.1% and 15.8%). It is linked closely to the 'born and bred' category in Table 6.8, a group totally unrepresented in the Suffolk samples. Such farmers perhaps represent more of a 'traditional' or 'peasant' group, not surprisingly unrepresented among the larger, more technologically sophisticated, farmers of East Anglia. The single most important factor causing dissatisfaction, cited by eighteen farmers, was the nature of specific farm tasks. In contrast to the broad and general liking of farm work identified as a satisfaction in husbandry shown in Table A (eg. livestock rearing), these dislikes tend to be more specific, such as repairing machines or spraying crops. In Suffolk only a very small minority of the 1,000+ Sample (3.8%) mentioned specific job tasks as a cause of job dissatisfaction. It was mentioned by 14% of those in the 44 parishes but was only the fourth most frequently mentioned factor. Newby et al contrast this with the 28.4% of farm workers who cited specific job tasks as a cause of dissatisfaction in the Deferential Worker study (11). Their conclusions are of interest:

> In a very limited way this confirms previous observations on the more limited and pragmatic aspects of working class culture (Converse, 1965; Mann, 1970). However ,it is also clearly related to the subordinate nature of the farm worker's work situation compared with that of the farmer; 'autonomy' as a valued aspect of the job was cited by only 7.7% of the workers. (12).

This pragmatism, then, is not surprisingly somewhat higher in Devon, on more traditional petit bourgeois farms, than in Suffolk. Certainly evidence from the 100 Sample suggests that the larger more 'autonomous' farmer employing labour is in a position to avoid having to perform the less pleasant tasks of farming, hence this reaction to the question on least liked aspects of farming from an employer of two full-time workers:

Nothing really, as long as I've got good people prepared to work for

me. (240 acre dairy farmer)

However smaller farmers in less advantageous positions are closer to workers in their views on this and could be quite vociferous about certain tasks they have to undertake:

> The mechanical side. I'm a bloody poor mechanic. (70 acre dairy farmer)
>
> I don't like tractor work. I detest it. (100 acre dairy farm)

Nevertheless the majority are happy with their position, and as already shown, attach great importance to the freedom, independence, and autonomy of farming. As already indicated it seems likely that these notions are employed in a different way by a small family farmer than by one of the 1,000+ sample. The use of the notion is at the same time more expressive and more pragmatic than in the Suffolk samples.

It is expressive in that it implies an attachment to the notion of 'farming as a way of life'. There is a difference between the autonomy of the capitalist employer and the 'property-owning' worker. At the same time there is a pragmatic element inherent in this, in that control over one's own work process is a definite advantage compared to being an employee. Thus notions of independence and freedom contain elements that are both ideological and economic (referring both to control over one's own work and to economic rights to the product of one's own labour). Thus MacKenzie talks of the aspirations of factory workers as follows:

> to these men, a business of one's own has been regarded as offering prestige, independence, and above all, freedom from the constraints of a particular work situation. (13)

But in other sectors of employment, where craft work predominates, MacKenzie stressed the positive role of self-employment in allowing the development of the intrinsic satisfaction of the craft work itself (14).

Thus, as Scase and Goffee conclude, the search for autonomy and independence conceals a diversity of personal motives and expectations (15). Against the freedom of self-employment Scase and Goffee put considerable emphasis, in a study of the building industry, on the curtailment of that autonomy by "competition in the petty commodity sector of the market" and on being "subject to the scrutiny of customers and the fluctuations of market forces" (16). In agriculture, however, such market scrutiny has not usually been seen as a curtailment on autonomy and the fluctuations of market forces have largely been corrected by government action in the post-war period. Only in recent years, since the survey was conducted, have restictions on production, especially milk quotas, perhaps presented an equivalent curtailment of autonomy.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The role of hired labour and the attitudes of farmers to hired labour is of some importance in understanding both the economic and ideological structure of family farming. Family farmers' position in the labour market is relatively strong. West Devon has long been an area of low wages and higher than average unemployment. This, coupled with low levels of trade union membership in all sectors, can even mean that farm jobs are relatively attractive compared to some sectors of employment. Only a few farmers highlighted problems of attracting labour when it was needed. A few more concentrated on the problems of hiring labour already mentioned.

Farmers were sceptical of the need for workers to be formally qualified, a fact that was perhaps not surprisng in view of farmers own low levels of formal education. Only 16% felt formal qualifications were useful for farm workers, compared with 38% who felt qualifications would definitely not be useful. Instead considerable emphasis was placed on the personal and moral characteristics of workers and local farming expertise. One farmer's wife succinctly put the case:

> Got to be born and bred to it to really appreciate it. Something you can't just learn in twelve months. It's something you acquire throughout your life. It's like our kids now - they're with it all the time and it's just second nature to them. (80 acre dairy farmer's wife; non-employer)

46% of farmers emphasised moral qualities alone - honesty, good character, reliability - when discussing the attributes of a good worker. Some typical responses are as follows:

> Honest, reliable and punctual. (340 acre dairy farmer; employer)

> Someone honest in the first place, and reliable. (60 acre livestock farmer; non-emloyer)

> Interested in farming. I would like to have known the chap for quite a while. And want a respectable chap of course, one who wasn't too fussy. (80 acre livestock farmer; non-employer)

A further 34% of the 100 Sample added to these qualities the need for experience of farming and practical knowledge of how to perform farm tasks. Linking this to a 'local' background was common, as illustrated in the third quotation above. The characteristics of a 'good worker' mirror those of the ideal background for farmers themselves. Indeed the ideal worker was for many the son of a farmer, preferably a farmer known personally. On the one hand this is indicative of the importance of farming experience, and specifically self-employed farming experience, for many family farmers' notions of 'good farming', notions that are for

many deeply rooted in an ideology of localism. On the other hand it is also a reflection of the realities of the precarious and cyclical nature of simple commodity production, and the fact that there will be farmers' sons available on the labour market either permanently or for short periods prior to returning to the family farm.

The temporary availability of some young workers might be a positive advantage to a prospective employer, who is himself likely to wish to replace hired with family labour at a later stage of the family development cycle. The sometimes intense contrast between town and country life helps to cement this pattern:

> There's town people and there's country people and you can have a country person living in a town who will never be a town person. They have that approach to life - probably take a lot more care doing things like finishing a job instead of filling their time sheet up. And you've got town people who will never make country people. They are two different communities - one living in an open space, one living like sardines. (75 acre livestock farmer; non-employer)

The qualities of a local farmer's son are likely to be reinforced by friendship, kinship and, in the case of Methodists, shared religous sympathies. Some further examples of the desirable qualities of a farm worker are given below:

> Should be brought up to it, not from a town but a farmer's son. Time shouldn't matter - it should be like family working. He should be prepared to put his hand to any job, not too specialised. (210 acre mixed farmer; non-employer)

> The traditional local lad, a farmer's son or a farm worker's son interested in agriculture. (90 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

> Them hard to get now. Conscientous. Ability to get on with people. Trustworthy. Brought up on a farm. (80 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

> Being a local chap would be very important. They understand the area and local problems, so you have a better relationship. We had a chap from South Devon once who was a damned nuisance, unreliable and untrustworthy. North Devon chaps are brought up well. (280 acre dairy farmer; employer)

> Well usually would give preference to a country born lad - a farmer's son or a farm worker's son. You know what to expect, and I'd take him and try to make him proficient; show him the jobs, what to look for in cows. (100 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

The last example, in particular, indicates the way in which farm workers are often seen as essentially young workers, or even young farmers, to be helped on their farming careers and utilised when extra labour is needed in the family development cycle. Thus this particular farmer, no longer an employer, had employed a full-time worker until his own son left school. The circulation of labour between farms not only evens out the varying requirements for labour but it can also help to ease the problems of shedding hired labour when sons or daughters have left school. It is usually easier (financially) to dispense with a local farmer's son already actively developing his own farming career than with a farm worker with no stake in the industry other than as a seller of labour power.

This is not meant to imply that all farm workers in the area are sons of farmers. There are, of course, farm workers of long standing, although their numbers have been greatly reduced. What is important here is the ideology of the farmers and their commitment to a certain kind of worker. The avoidance of redundancy payments and inter-personal tensions caused on dismissal may help to explain many farmers' intense localism and apparent reluctance to participate in the national or even regional agricultural labour market. The ideology of localism would appear to place limits on the choice of labour and present a barrier to a full participation in a commoditised labour market. Similarly there can be strong ideological opposition to the whole notion of employing hired labour, as expressed by this farmer with two children of school age:

> I could have taken on a man full-time and no doubt carried him alright, but I just couldn't be hanged up with it. Because once you've employed you've got safety officers running in and out every so often; you've got Union men coming; you're tied hand and fast. You may say, right I'll employ a man, but to make that man useful to his full potential I'd have to invest say £15,000 in the farm on more buildings and more stock to make that man really worthwhile. And he can turn round on his heel the next day and out the gate, and you haven't got a leg to stand on. It just isn't on. (120 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

The close juxtaposition of ideological and economic argument is interesting. As shown in the earlier discussion of labour organisation the way in which full commoditisation is resisted is not necessarily an aspect of irrational peasant resistance, for ideologies are developed in the context of thoroughly 'economic' calculation. In the case of farmers who do employ workers the relationships cultivated are in line with the close identification apparent in the localistic attitudes towards the qualities of a good worker. Attitudes towards employment practices are important indicators of class perceptions and class relations even when a majority of those interviewed do not currently employ labour.

In their work on capitalist agriculture Newby et al have emphasised the identification of the employer with his workers, and in particular the exercise of paternalism within a "deferrential dialectic" (17). Paternalism is based on both differentiation and identification:

> On the one hand its interest is to maintain a degree of hierarchial differentiation from those over whom it rules; on the other hand it wishes to cultivate their identification by defining the relationship as an organic partnership in a co-operative enterprise. (18)

However they also emphasise that the smaller employers may not have "the wherewithal to exercise paternalism", for example stocks of tied housing, ability to offer charity, and so on. Furthermore Newby has also pointed out that this lack of power coupled with adverse economic factors may seriously undermine any kind of paternalist relationship

(19). Scase and Goffee recognise the need to reconsider relationships between small employers and their workers in their discussion of the building trade. They contend that a greater degree of market fluctuation than in agriculture leads to a different strategy of employee control, which they term "fraternalism". Employers practising fraternalism are described in the following manner:

> In effect, they continue to see themselves as tradesmen working with and alongside their employees. In this sense their work situation bears a close resemblance to their prior experience as employees and it continues to influence their present behaviour as employers. (21)

There is no hierarchial differentiation - the emphasis is almost entirely on partnership and co-operation. To what extent would it be appropriate to apply this notion to smaller employers of labour (or intermittent employers) in agriculture? First, of course, it should be said that only a relatively small number of farmers have risen from the rank of employee, and that these tend to be the smaller non-employing farmers. This is important for Scase and Goffee attach considerable importance to the origins of the builders in their survey when describing fraternalism. Nevertheless there is no reason why this should be a prerequisite in every case for a kind of fraternalism, which is essentially a strategy by which proprietors can control and manage workers in businesses dependent on a combination of proprietorial and hired labour. Furthermore a direct experience of being employed may be less important to the generation of fraternalism where strong local and kinship networks operate in the employment of farm labour.

A more serious problem in applying the notion to agriculture concerns the very different capital composition of farm enterprises compared to building enterprises, and corresponding wealth (as opposed, perhaps, to

income) differences between employer and employee. This is recognised by Scase and Goffee, who suggest that fraternalism cannot easily be applied even to small-scale agriculture:

> Small farmers may also work alongside their employees but, we would suggest the larger capital assets which they possess - often through inheritance - fundamentally affects the relationship with employees in two major ways. First, it makes the contribution of their own manual labour to the success of their business relatively less important than that of the productive assets which they own. Secondly, it ensures a difference in material wealth between themselves and their employees which makes the exercise of paternalistic authority a more appropriate form of managerial control. (22)

Although containing some truth - it would certainly be mistaken to claim that relations in small-scale agriculture were identical to those in the building trade - this argument fails to take account of the complexities of small property ideology which can transcend straightforward economic comparisons.

In particular the first argument, while drawing on the reality of high land values and consequent material wealth of many farmers (not all however - eg. tenants and heavily indebted mortgagees) ignores the fact that this in no way diminishes the need for such farmers to work hard and in close contact with employees. As Scase and Goffee correctly observe farmers may indeed work alongside their employees, and for the majority in the 100 Sample this was undoubtdly true. What they fail to point out is that for the majority of producers this <u>will</u> be an economic necessity. Unworked land is, of course, a depreciating asset and cannot yield a return. It is difficult to see how this essential labour, one of the defining characteristics of the farming life, is relatively less important in determining relationships than the fact of ownership of land. During the survey - possibly as a result of massive increases in land prices during the mid and late 1970s - farmers frequently claimed

that their wealth was "paper money" which gave them little business advantage and certainly did little to ease their work load. Indeed in some instances increased liability to capital taxation made increased land prices a handicap in the transmission of the farm to the next generation. The strength of this view, and the possible adoption of such views by workers as well should not be underestimated. Bearing in mind also the kin and local networks of such importance in the agricultural labour market, which Scase and Goffee ignore, it follows that fraternalism might be apt for describing farmer/worker relations in some instances. Indeed fraternalism, as a deliberate strategy, might actually cement the property ideologies outlined. Fraternalism might be a means of justifying property inequalities by reinforcing their apparent unimportance in the 'every-day' farming world.

When asked to describe the best way to handle workers and the most desirable farmer/worker relationship the farmers surveyed certainly revealed views more akin to fraternailsm than paternalism:

> I've worked on both sides of the fence. I think mutual trust and mutual discussion on both sides of the equation. The person that owns the farm has ultimate responsibility, but other than that try and achieve almost joint decisions. (90 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

> Got to have a basic understanding that workman is equal to you. Boss-worker thing is gone. Farm worker is often beyond the boss and a bad worker will send you bankrupt quicker than anything else. (310 acre mixed farmer; employer)

> Friendly relationship. Treat him as you would expect to be treated yourself. (340 acre dairy farmer;employer)

> I always explained things and didn't keep it from young people. I believe in treating chaps like your own; co-operation and being kind to them. (60 acre livestock farmer; non-employer)

> Treat them as family. If they want a day off let them have it. Stay right with them, work with them. (200 acre mixed farmer; non-employer)

> Work with them. We're equal. (150 acre dairy farmer; non-employer)

This kind of fraternalism was a common response, although in some cases it was combined with a degree of distancing:

> Don't do it like I did. I was too soft. Firm approach. Experienced worker will need very little telling, but you've got to live with them so be friendly. (100 acre livestock farmer; non-employer)

> I like to be straightforward with them. Not always telling them off, but like to make sure they're doing the job properly. If not I tell them. (160 acre mixed farmer; employer)

> You've got to treat them fair. Got to be the boss and friendly too - tis a bad job when they tell the bosses what to do. (120 acre livestock farmer; non-employer)

All the farmers quoted either currently employ full or part time workers or have employed in the past. Their attitudes, therefore, are symptomatic of family farmers who employ to a greater or lesser extent during their working lives, but who are rarely crucially dependent on several workers for the successful management of the business. In this sense family farmers can be contrasted with both the large farmers surveyed by Newby in Suffolk and Scase and Goffee's small builders (who commonly employ 4-5 men). The hierarchial differentiation of paternalism is not present, but neither is the 'indispensability' of the skilled workers in the building trade, which helps to "compel the structuring of fraternalism between employers and employees" (23).

For family farmers hired labour, for reasons we have already seen, is rarely completely indispensable. The family farmer possesses options not open to builders or to larger capitalist farmers. So neither fraternalism nor paternalism are strictly necessary as strategies in the management of labour. Fraternalism emerges as a result of close in-work relationships, a common farming culture and deep kin, local and even religous networks. The discussion of labour relations and fraternalism

brings us close to the concerns of the next chapter which focusses on the class position of family farmers.

CONCLUSION

This section of the thesis has focussed on the way in which labour is deployed in contemporary family farming in Devon, and the ideological and cultural characteristics which surround labour practices. It is clear, notwithstanding the centrality of the farmer himself in the labour process, that non-family labour components are important in the family farming system. However this use of labour is more varied and diverse than the systematic use of hired labour. As a result the notion that *simple commodity production* is crucially dependent upon a commoditised labour market is questioned. It is shown that resistance to the full operation of such a labour market is not only ideological but is also rooted in the economics of agriculture.

This chapter and the preceeding one have shown how, in the case of land and labour, a thoroughly 'modern' family farming system is not fully commoditised in the manner explained by Friedmann. Nor do we see signs that resistance to commoditisation is likely to be swept away in the immediate future. True the trends of the land market push in that direction, but at the same time there are some countervailing trends. Building on the arguments presented in this manner the final chapter attempts a re-evaluation of commoditisation and its impact on family farming.

FOOTNOTES

1. DARTINGTON AMENITY RESEARCH TRUST. (1978) Agricultural Employment and Unemployment in Devon: a Report under the Manpower Services Commission Job Creation Programme, Dartington, Devon.

2. DOWNING, P. Personal communication, Dartington Amenity Research Trust.

3. BOUQUET, M. (1985) Family, Servants and Visitors: The Farm Household in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Devon, Norwich: Geo Books; FRIEDMANN, H. (1978) Simple commodity production and wage labour in the American Plains, Journal of Peasant Studies, 6 (1),, pp.71-100.

4. BOUQUET, M. (1985) op. cit.

5. ibid.

6. Farmers, and wives if present, were asked to describe in general terms farm tasks undertaken and frequency. An estimate of the weekly time input of wives, based on the responses and data on size of enterprise etc, was calculated in the subsequent analysis using the author's own practical knowledge of the length of time required for specific farm tasks.

7. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) Property, Paternalism and Power: A Study of East Anglian Farmers, London: Hutchinson.

8. GOLDTHORPE, J. H. (1966) Attitudes and behaviour of car assembly workers: adeviant case and a theoretical critique, British Journal of Sociology, 17, pp.277-244.

9. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) op. cit. p.153.

10. The notion of 'contradiction' as applied to family businesses has recently been sharply criticised. Curran and Burrows contend that contradiction is more applicable to the problems of Marxist theory than to empirical phenomena. Their criticism is well placed and much of this and the preceeding chapter demonstrates that such 'contradictions' stem from entirely 'rational' survival strategies, by producers thoroughly 'at home' within capitalism even if they do not reflect the characteristics of 'pure' capitalism. See: CURRAN, J. and BURROWS, R.J. (1986) The sociology of petit capitalism: a trend report, Sociology, 20 (2), pp.265-279.

11. NEWBY, H. (1977) The Deferential Worker, London: Allen Lane.

12. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) op. cit. p.155. CONVERSE, P.E. (1965) The nature of belief systems in mass publics, in APTER, D.E. Ed Ideology and Discontent, Glencoe III: Free Press.

pp.206-261; MANN, M. (1970) The social cohesion of liberal democracy, American Sociological Review, 35, pp.423-439.

13. MACKENZIE, G. (1973) The Aristocracy of Labour, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.51.

14. ibid

15. SCASE, R. and GOFFEE, R. (1982) The Entrepreneurial Middle Class, London: Croom Helm.

16. ibid. pp.75-6.

17. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) op. cit. See also NEWBY, H. (1975) The deferential dialectic, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 17 (2), pp.139-164.

18. NEWBY, H. BELL, C. ROSE, D. and SAUNDERS, P. (1978) op. cit. p.29.

19. NEWBY, H. (1975) op. cit.

20. SCASE, R. and GOFFEE. R. (1982) op. cit.

21. ibid. p.108.

22. ibid. p.117.

23. ibid. p.117.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION: COMMODITISATION RECONSIDERED

INTRODUCTION

In summing up the main themes of the thesis this concluding chapter has four main objectives. First it seeks to reiterate the importance of the impact of a generalised commodity economy upon twentieth century agriculture in Devon. The manner in which farmers have adapted to the demands of the market is examined, with particular emphasis on the role of the state in incorporating farmers within an economy characterised by high levels of production and some degree of technical advancement. Secondly, however, some of the apparent contradictions of these processes of change and of the activities of the state are analysed. In particular the notions of simple commodity production and commoditisation are subjected to critical scrutiny. Even within such an apparently 'advanced' agricultural structure full commoditisation has not occurred. Farmers resist the full logic of commoditisation and, in a few instances, are excluded from it. However this resistance does not simply imply either a dilution of a generalised commodity economy nor the assertion of an irrational set of peasant values, an alternative rationale. Rather it marks the way in which family farmers have used non-commoditised relations to modify the content of commoditised relations.

One of the main points that emerges from this discussion of commoditisation and resistance to commoditisation is the diversity of forms of family farming encountered in the survey. This has been remarked upon at several points during the thesis and emerges forcefully

when consideration is given to the "coexistence of commoditised and non-commoditised relationships" (1). However patterns can be discerned within this diversity. So the third section of the chapter proposes a typology of family farms based on the different ways in which commoditisation is processed by farmers according to internal and external demands and constraints. Finally a concluding section briefly points to recent changes in the political economy of agriculture and the impact some of these may have on family farming.

THE GENERALISED COMMODITY ECONOMY

In taking the opportunity in this chapter to emphasise the need for a critical approach to the model of simple commodity production, it would be a great mistake to minimise the importance of commodity production prevailing in general throughout the economy, particularly as it has had such an impact upon agriculture. Friedmann's model of simple commodity production clearly implies the need for the commoditisation of all aspects of the production process. However an alternative view of a generalised commodity economy suggests that it is possible for some elements to remain non-commoditised. The important point to recognise in this model is that "individuals or households cannot reproduce themselves without some involvement in commodity circuits, and that the general 'logic' governing economic life and livelihood strategies is that of capitalism." (2) The main thrust of this argument is returned to in the next section but it needs stating here for two reasons. First in delineating the growth of a generalised commodity economy in agriculture it should not be assumed that all conditions of production are brought

equally within the commodity circuit. Secondly, neither should any assumptions be made about the precise manner in which actors respond to forces of commoditisation.

Chapters three and four of this thesis described in some detail the way in which the agricultural structure of West Devon was transformed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries largely under the impact of market changes. The incorporation of Devon's agriculture within a national economy and the demands of that economy, particularly for dairy products, led to specialisation of production, technological change and to high levels of productivity. In a number of ways Devon farmers showed themselves particularly adept and well suited to respond to the necessary changes, albeit at a slower pace than wished for by some MAFF officials and agricultural economists. Taking the usual criteria used to analyse the depth of penetration of a generalised commodity economy within a local agricultural sector the picture that emerges is one of steady advance. The volume of agricultural production, especially over the last fifty years, has steadily increased. It has been produced on larger, more specialist, more efficient and less labour intensive farms. It has been produced through the application of a complex arsenal of purchased inputs, in the form of machines, fertilisers, feedstuffs, and so forth. A regime of relatively low output, internally self-sufficient farm units has been largely replaced by high-input high-output farming. This has necessitated a deep and sustained engagement with other economic agents, such as suppliers of inputs and marketing organisations. For many it has also meant an increased reliance on finance capital, with bank loans becoming necessary to service land or capital good purchases, or even to smooth out the peaks and troughs of

the trading account.

However, as has also been shown, the penetration of such commoditised relationships has been incomplete in some ways. While nearly all farmers employ a standard array of technical means of production, output levels are not uniform (eg. the dairy/livestock contrast) and levels of indebtedness vary markedly. Nonetheless few farms have been unaffected by the cost-price squeeze which in recent years has meant, for some, a treadmill of ever-increasing ouput and capital outlay. In adapting to these changes farmers fit rather uneasily into the categories to which they might traditionally have been alloted. In analysing the traditional petite bourgeoisie in British society Bechhofer and Elliot are at pains to exclude sophisticated new technology small firms from their analysis. They stress instead the "traditional" and unchanging nature of the stratum:

> Taken together, these three elements, of low capital and simple material and social technology, serve to define the occupational base of the stratum and also to hint at its anachronistic nature. If, as is frequently claimed, the stratum is in some sense marginal or detached from the middle classes and interests of contemporary industrial societies it is easily seen how this has come about, for many aspects of the petit bourgeois job have remained substantially similar since the beginning of the nineteenth century. (3)

By contrast the new stratum of the middle-class based on very recent technological developments is seen as a "scientificaly qualified elite" with "little in common" with those in the more traditional occupations (4).

While the distinction between shop-keeping (5) together with certain crafts, and home-based computer enterprises may be stark, family farmers do not, however, fit neatly into either category. They belong to a

'mature' sector of the economy and are clearly not members of a scientific elite, but nor have many aspects of their work remained unchanged since the nineteenth century. Indeed the changes that have occurred in the industry have given rise to contradictory tendencies with regard to the social organisation of the stratum. Processes of capital intensification, technological transformation, and commodity production have integrated farmers into a network of social and economic relationships beyond the farm gate. Relations with the suppliers of agricultural inputs and of credit are now integral to the social organisation of modern agriculture. So too are the complex relations between the industry and the state mediated by the NFU on behalf of its members.

However these relations, central though they may be to an 'objective' view of the social organisation of contemporary agriculture, are not always perceived as such by farmers themselves. Of far greater immediacy to many farmers are the implications that the processes of change have had for labour organisation on the farm. And in this respect the social organisation of agriculture appears to have drawn closer to the norm of the traditional petite bourgeoisie. Hired labour has been shed and many farmers now work on their own or with members of their immediate family. Reciprocal relationships of varying kinds are entered into with other farmers, and in general there is a reluctance to enter into the conventional labour market. Even when hired labour is employed, as shown in chapter six, the social and idelogical practices that structure the employment of labour mean that it is far more than a simple contractual matter. Labour organisation is bound up with the operation of a moral economy in which notions of 'good farming', kinship, localism, and

religous sensibilities all play their part. In spite of the diminishing importance, in magnitude, of labour in British agriculture labour practices remain central to an understanding of the differential response of farmers to commoditisation.

In responding in these ways to processes of commoditisation farmers are interpreting in social actions macro-economic trends and shifts in state policies. The need arises, therefore, for a political economic approach which recognises that economic conditions and social action are the outcome of an interaction between politics and economics:

> Thus, markets are structured by the political decisions and actions of various agencies of the state. They, in turn, are influenced and constrained by external groups whose power is related to their structural position in the economy as well as to the strength of their political organisation. (6)

Clearly it has been beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the manner in which these political processes occur (7), but some of the outcomes are clear enough. State policies for agriculture since the Second World War have amounted to far more than a means of making minor adjustments to the market system.

Based on the corporatist relations between the industry and the Ministry of Agriculture, and latterly the supra-national corporatism of the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy, policies have been devised to encourage increased production through price support and capital investment grants. No sectors of agriculture are unaffected by these polices, for even those commodities which do not receive price support (such as pigmeat) are influenced by the support for other sectors producing competitive commodities or agricultural inputs such as cereals for animal feeds. The influence of policy runs far deeper than its affects

on commodity prices and returns to producers. It has implications for the cost structure of the industry and has major ramifications for sectors up-stream and down-stream of agriculture itself. Thus the benefits of agricultural support are not confined to agriculture itself. Indeed the history of agricultural incomes and the evidence of a continuing cost-price squeeze alongside the burgeoning costs of agricultural support suggests that much of the benefit has indeed gone elsewhere (8). Thus the costs of land and inputs, and more recently the cost of borrowing have all contributed to the pressure on farmers to increase their productive activity. State agricultural policies have, in most cases, prompted an increasing incorporation of farmers within wider circuits of commoditisation. While some farmers have exploited new relationships with bank managers alongside new technologies in order to expand production others have failed to make the necessary adjustments and there have been business failures as a result. State support has therefore been a mixed blessing for farmers anxious to retain control over the level and nature of their production.

Nor are state policies which influence agriculture confined to those emanating from the agricultural agencies of the state. Farmers are also affected by fiscal legislation, land and property law, town and country planning, public health legislation, and so forth. Clearly much of this legislation is not designed primarily with agricultural productivity in mind. And even in the case of legislation governing agricultural tenure, for example, a whole range of wider political and ideological factors come to the fore. The decline of landlordism in British agriculture was not a 'policy decision'. Its origins lie in the outcome of fervent political and ideological debate on the nature of democracy, property

and equity. To the extent that its demise can be seen in legislation we have to look not only to laws specifically governing landlord-tenant relations but also to electoral and local government reforms, and fiscal measures. Whereas the consequences of agricultural price support policies are fairly clear the same cannot be said of the declining role of the landlord in British agriculture. As discussed in chapters four and five what some have termed the commodification of land has had very uneven consequences for the incorporation of agriculture into wider commodity circuits. This point is developed further in the next section.

A complex interpenetration of politics and ideology, apparent from any analysis of landord-tenant relations, is not entirely absent with regard to other aspects of the state's involvement in agriculture. The rationale for involvement, and indeed the fruits of the policy, have not been confined to the success of agriculture in furnishing the nation's food requirements. A family enterprise by resolving within itself conflicts between capital and labour and by providing an example of thrift and hard work has been acclaimed as a repository of values, an ideological resonance, of great political moment for the stability of capitalism. The ideological significance of small business in contemporary capitalism, at least in Britain, is difficult to exaggerate and the rural and pastoral component gives an extra dimension to small farming businesses as a source of values within and for capitalism (9). Thus the unity accorded to family farming, which this thesis attempts to unravel by exploring how the diversity of family farming is structured by differential responses to commoditisation, is largely ideological.

THE LIMITS TO COMMODITISATION

At the outset of this thesis a case was made for a serious examination of Harriet Friedmann's notion of commoditisation, and its applicability to an understanding of the changes which have taken place in family farm production within advanced capitalism. The chapters that followed explored the theme through a detailed empirical examination of the historical and contemporary development of family farming in West Devon. In a number of ways the general theoretical orientation given by Friedmann's work has proved useful. The notion of a double specification of simple commodity production, based on the interaction of internal and external characteristics, has been of value in directing attention to the behaviour of farmers as a response both to the internal requirements of family productive units and to the constraints and conditions set by external forces, such as input and output markets, finance capital and the state. The manner in which farmers have adapted to, or resisted, the impact of commoditisation, and the relationships this entails, has thus been a major focus of the study. The nature of these relationships provides the content of class relationships broadly defined, ie. beyond relations solely between capital and labour. A combination of the varying relationships between farmers and others and the nature of the 'moral economy' in which farmers operate define the conditions for the reproduction of family farming.

However although Friedmann's theoretical insights have proved valuable, it has not been possible to discern the operation of a pure model of simple commodity production, in which all external relations are commodity relations. On the contrary, although generalised commodity

production prevails in the wider economy and is crucial to the continued survival of family production, non-commoditised relations have not been entirely displaced in contemporary family farming. In a number of ways resistance to, or exclusion from, commoditisation is of crucial importance to understanding the nature of modern family farming. One of the main strengths of the commoditisation approach is its avoidance of the dualism of earlier studies of peasants or modes of production, highlighting instead the integration of family producers within capitalism (10). However studies of commoditisation run the risk of re-creating false dualisms in promoting a search for an ideal-typical simple commodity production in which modes of resistance assume a lesser importance than the mechanisms of integration into commodity networks. This is scarcely surprising in view of the importance accorded to the conditions of simple commodity production's existence which are "provided exclusively by the capitalist mode of production" (11).

As a result some studies of commoditisation fail to adequately address the manner in which farmers themselves respond to and participate in the process of commoditisation. Too much emphasis is placed solely on external determination tending towards a linear view of agricultural change (12), in which the resilience of family producers is taken to be closely correlated with the degree to which they engage with the capitalist economy. Commoditisation is seen as the path which will ensure the survival of family production as a form (although many individual producers will inevitably disappear in the processes of change which take place). In this analysis considerable emphasis is placed on the competitiveness of family farmers. The argument is fairly straight forward. The peculiar dependence of agriculture upon land

restricts the expansion of capitalist enterprises, a process which is subject to the availability of land on the open market. Furthermore the spatial factor in the agricultural production process means that economies of scale are reaped by relatively small family farmers as well as by capitalist producers. Thus family farmers are able to compete with capitalists in production and on the land market. Indeed some have argued, including Harriet Friedmann (13), that family producers can at times out-compete capitalists. The persistence of family farming is linked directly to family farming's competitiveness buttressed by the nature of land as a factor of production (14). At the same time the involvement in the market-place for agricultural commodities implies similar involvement in input and credit markets. This in turn implies a process of subsumption to capital and an individualisation of the farm unit.

What these arguments ignore, as a number of recent contributions have made clear, is the extent to which non-commoditised relations might be vital to the success of family enterprises within a system of generalised commodity production. In other words circumstances may encourage family farmers to engage successfully with capitalism precisely through continuing to participate in a range of non-commoditised relations. Thus paradoxically the strength of commoditisation, as a process by which farmers are drawn into production for the market, may be based upon the success of non-commoditised relations (15). The contention is that a variety of forms of relationship can exist, nd that one of the biggest failings of the literature on simple commodity production is that it fails to confront this heterogeneity.

Family farmers in West Devon, as they have emerged in the twentieth century, come from different 'pasts' and are entering different 'futures'. Clearly a quasi-subsistence peasant-like sector provided one strand of the new commercially orientated family farmers, while erstwhile capitalists shedding labour with the onset of new technologies provided another. Yet another group in a more recent times has been those newcomers to the idustry bringing outside capital resources. If these groups appeared to come together under the strict regulation of war and immediate post-war conditions then the unity again dissolved as some of the contradictions of the post-war political-economic framework became apparent.

In particular the full implications of changes in the operation of the land market became apparent. It is the availability of land which determines the extent to which farmers can expand production. Those family farmers who own their own land with sufficient resources to live comfortably are hard to displace by those wishing to expand. Nor are they easily subsumed to capital in any meaningful way. They are rarely indebted and frequently they are able to limit, partly through self-provision, their dependence on the agricultural input sector. Notwithstanding their total dependence upon a commodity economy in which to market their goods they are able to exhibit a degree of resistance to commoditisation in one crucial market - the land market. Not only do many farmers inherit their holdings, but many newcomers to the industry come not with heavy debts but on the basis of inherited or accumulated wealth from outside agriculture. Thus only 22 out of 88 owner-occupying farmers in the 100 Sample had outstanding debts on land purchase. These

were only substantial in eight cases, and for the remainder high levels of inflation had made the loans and levels of re-payment now seem very small. A greater number, as we saw in chapter 5, had originally aquired land through loans but had susequently re-paid. The ability of so many family farms to maintain re-payments and complete them, and to expand the holding so as to allow sons to work on the land as well, must not be forgotten. There are ways, capital taxation being a major one, in which the debt (rent) can be re-applied but the importance of this in agriculture, especially for small units, is still relatively minor.

Indebted farmers or those under some other form of pressure are more dependent upon relations with both finance capital and, by virtue of higher levels of farming intensity, with agricultural input firms. But few farmers have yet been reduced to the role of the propertied labourer akin to that of a manager or worker of a produduction process completely subsumed to outside capital. This assertion is all the clearer because of the nature of relations entered into by the very few farmers who can be fitted into this category. I think of the poultry farmer interviewed, who sold all his broliers on a direct fixed-price contract to the firm which provided the feed, and systematic instructions on feeding methods. The farmer owned the small holding, on mortgage, and determined his own working hours but scarcely the content of the work. Such an arrangement is in marked contrast to the numerous other mortgagees selling milk to the Milk Marketing Board, a farmer controlled organisation with state backing which has been hugely successful in attaining high prices for its members. Few farmers are so mortgaged that they are in any danger of ceding direct control of their business to outside interests. Even a small farmer, with 100 acres, may own land, stock and machinery assets

of a quarter of a million pounds. That in itself is a powerful buffer in his relations with capital, even at a time when debt in agriculture is growing.

If the land question provides one instance whereby the full impact of commdoditisation is limited, another is that of labour relations. In chapter six a detailed analysis was provided of the variety of ways in which labour is applied on family farms. Its full commoditisation can be resisted in two main ways. First some farmers are able to alter farming methods, postpone investments that would require higher labour inputs, or reduce farming intensity to avoid taking on extra labour. Secondly farmers may have access to a range of family labour sources, reciprocal labour or machinery sharing, and semi-commoditised contracting arrangements. In these two ways the inevitable labour shortages which arise during the family development cycle can be partly or wholly overcome without recourse to the commoditised hired labour market. This is in direct contrast to the suggestions of Friedmann and of Goodman and Redclift in a recent debate in which, notwithstanding other sharp differences, they agree on the structural necessity of commoditised labour to family production within capitalism (16). The suggestion here is that while the prescence of commoditsed labour in any family farming regime cannot be denied its theoretical significance has been grossly exaggerated in these contributions.

The ability of any individual producer to resist participation in a circuit of commoditised labour is dependent therefore upon two factors: first the freedom he has to adapt his business along the lines referred to above, eg. de-intensification; secondly the extent to which the

farmer can participate in non-commoditised labour relations. Whereas in the first instance the nature of land ownership, determined by a combination of state intervention and past business acumen, is crucial, what matters in the second is the depth of a farmer's involvement in a local or moral economy. In their discussion of the traditional petite bourgeoisie Bechhofer and Elliot place considerable emphasis on the moral economy of the petite bourgeoisie, stressing the role of business autonomy and local values (17). To the extent to which family farmers proclaim for themselves an ideological unity it is embedded in a social structure based on localism and a moral economy of farming.

Gavin Smith has written of the term "moral economy" that it "seems to have come into common use chiefly because it teases us with the juxtaposition of morality alongside economic matters which we normally take to be amoral." (18) Clearly then it is a term that can be linked very closely to modes of resistance to commoditisation. Ultimately the family farm survives, or is reproduced, by its ability to engage with the capitalist economy but in such a way that its production relations, internal and communal, are not totally subsumed to capital. In that sense, as Smith stresses, it is hard to see how pure simple commodity production can exist (19). Non-commoditised relations are almost invariably crucial to the operation of family enterprises even in an advanced western economy such as Britain.

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF FAMILY FARMS

One of the main conclusions of this study is that the diversity of

family farming renders unacceptable a unified notion of simple commodity production. However it is important to avoid the danger of implying that the diversity is such that no pattern of types of farm can be discerned. The very existence of points of cleavage discussed in the thesis, between dairy and livestock producers for example, implies that the farmers in the sample do cluster into a number of types. Clearly a typology of farm types could be constructed around a large number of different criteria and a choice has to be made concerning the objectives of any particular typology. At different points in the thesis it has been found useful to draw distinctions between farmers on a range of characteristics. These include size of farm, position in the family development cycle, the type of commodities produced, alternative income sources, and so forth. However all this evidence ultimately serves the purpose, as originally set out in the first chapter, of focussing on the nature and extent of commoditisation. A typology must reflect this concern.

It would be possible to construct a typology on the basis of the extent of resistance to commoditisation alone. However there are problems with such an approach. For example the focus on commoditisation is not an end in itself. Commoditisation is a process with contrasting consequences for different farm businesses. It is differentially experienced and differentially processed by farmers in contrasting situations. The precise manifestation of commoditisation on any farm is determined by the relationship between internal and external factors. A high level of commoditisation may be the outcome of quite different sets of internal-external relations. Thus to concentrate on the importance of commoditisation alone would be to create some very curious anomalies.

For example the most highly commoditised group of farmers would contain both the successful specialised tenant farmer with limited constraints on his strategies of accumulation and little need to embrace non-commoditised relationships, and the heavily mortgaged struggling farmer who, for various reasons, has no access to non-commoditised relationships. Part of the problem centres on the nature of the resistance to commoditisation - whether it is true resistance, part of a strategy by producers, or exclusion. Thus in the case of producers exhibiting resistance to commoditisation, it may be for the majority a strategy whereby the encounter with a generalised commodity economy is mediated to the producers' benefit. For a few, however, it may imply exclusion from otherwise beneficial commodity relations. Non-commoditised relations, in the same way as commoditised ones, are by no means equally beneficial to all participants. Unequal exchange cannot be ruled out.

Another problem in attempting to construct a typology based on commoditisation is how to equate commoditisation of very different factors of production - land, labour, credit, and so forth. Clearly these are not equal factors in any analysis. Particular primacy has to be accorded to land. The extent of commoditisation of land (the level of rental equivalent paid) will strongly influence the nature of labour commoditisation. The low-rent farmer may <u>choose</u> to lower farming intensity in order to avoid labour commoditisation. The high-rent farmer, in order to maintain a high-output farming system, may be <u>forced</u> to engage in a complex combination of commoditised and non-commoditised labour relations. But to give primacy to land alone is to ignore the interrelationships between land and other factors, chiefly the need to

satisfy the requirements of the family development cycle. With a sufficicently large farm and no family pressure a high-rent farmer may be in a relatively comfortable position. By contrast an owner-occupier with no rental payments may still be in a very difficult economic position due to the size of his family in relation to the size of farm. To complicate the matter still further family demands upon the farm will vary according to the availability of alternative income sources and/or the socially determined standard of living sought by members of the household.

What emerges from the shortcomings of a typology based on commoditisation alone is the need for a typology based on the differential manner in which commoditisation is processed by farmers according to the severity of the demands and constraints which the farm family faces in reproducing itself. Thus a major step in constructing a typology is to assess what can be seen as the "pressure" under which an individual farm business operates. High internal pressure may be exerted on a farm business in two ways: first through resource limitations (eg. lack of land or high rent land) and second through a high level of demand on those resources. Low pressure is apparent when productive resources are relatively abundant and the demands upon those resources modest. In order to take a first step in constructing an appropriate typology the extent of pressure facing a farm business has to be assessed through establishing the parameters of a demand/resource ratio.

The chief components of the demand side of the ratio are as follows:
(1) Family Composition and Size - the size and position in the family development cycle.

(2) Availability of Off-Farm Income - this is determined not only by the state of the local economy but also the willingness, ability and freedom of family members to engage in outside work.

(3) Consumption Standards - the desired level of consumption is itself socially constructed and is partly dependent upon age and education and integration into local frameworks of meaning.

The resource side of the ratio is made up as follows:

(1) Rental Equivalent - the extent of rent or mortgage payments for purchase or improvement of land and buildings.

(2) Productive Potential - determined by the size of the farm and the quality of the land.

(3) Capital Availability - the extent to which the business has recourse to savings or outside sources of capital to expand production.

Clearly the precise measurement of the demand/resource ratio is difficult and it is best to see this as part of a typological approach rather than a taxonomic one. It would be possible to construct a typology purely on the basis of the demand/resource ratio. Farms could be classified on various points of a scale from high to low. Their position on such a scale would be of considerable importance in predicting the intensity and type of commodity regimes of different farms of relevance to the discussions in chapter 5 on the contrast between dairying and livestock production. On the resource side the extent of commoditisation of land and credit would clearly be of considerable importance in determining the position on the ratio scale. The inclusion of the demand side introduces an actor-oriented perspective to the determination of the ratio. The commoditised

relations, concerning land and credit, are structured by the internal requirements of the family, so that the demand/resource ratio reflects the extent of commoditised land and credit relations but is not solely determined by those relations.

However a scale based solely on the ratio would fail to address the major issue of how the extent and form of labour commoditisation acts as a powerful mediating force vis-a-vis farmers' response to the demand/resource ratio. Thus in order to complete the typology an axis based on labour commoditisation is required. Farms showing a low level of labour commoditisation are those reliant solely on family labour and various reciprocal arrangements. Those at the high end are those making regular and significant uses of hired labour and commoditised forms of contracting. Clearly each axis provides a continuum and it is necessary to greatly reduce the possible combinations in order to construct a typology. The position occupied by any farmer on both axes of the typology will depend upon the outcome of the interaction of social and political-economic factors. The expressions "demand/resource ratio" and "commoditisation" should not be taken as primarily micro-economic categories. It is crucial to recognise, especially with regard to family businesses, that there is no clear distinction between the economic and the social. They are intertwined and mutually determining.

A fourfold typology is shown overleaf, but it has to be borne in mind that the aim is to provide a simplified and diagramatic representation of a diverse reality. A significant number of farmers will, in practice, inhabit niches close to the boundaries between categories. It also has to be pointed out that the typology is static and makes no attempt to

cater for the dynamic aspects of change in agriculture. But it is recognised, indeed it is crucial to the analysis in this thesis, that a switching of categories occurs as farmers' circumstances change. It must be emphasised that the terms used to describe the typical farmer in each of the four boxes - 'hardworking', 'traditional', 'succesful' and 'gentleman' - are terms encountered in fieldwork. They were used by a number of respondents, never together as a complete classificatory system, but separately to label individual farmers. What at first appeared to be simple descriptive terms applicable to a few individuals came to assume considerable socio-structural significance as successive layers of meaning became clearer.

Figure 7.1. Typology of Family Farmers in West Devon.

Demand/Resource Ratio	Degree of Labour Commoditisation: LOW	Degree of Labour Commoditisation: HIGH
LOW	1. 'Hardworking Farmer'	3. 'Successful Farmer'
HIGH	2. 'Traditional Farmer'	4. 'Gentleman Farmer'

THE FOUR TYPES

1. 'The Hardworking Farmer'.

Falling into this category are those farmers with clear demand/resource pressure, necessitating an intensive style of farming and high

productivity. In other words the farmer is likely to be deeply incorporated into commoditised relations with input firms and perhaps with finance capital. His survival is dependent upon an active engagement with the wider economy. The 'hardworking farmer' is likely to be particularly affected by changes in interest rates, agricultural price support policies and the costs of purchased inputs. He is also likely to adjust his production methods to cope with such exigencies, primarily through increasing production. All this implies an increasing depth of commoditisation. However the key to his survival is not only this mode of compliance to commoditisation, it is also the ability to absorb some of the rigours of change through the exploitation of non-commoditised labour relations. The farmer works very hard himself, perhaps accompanied by a high labour input from wife or children and various reciprocal and contracting arrangements with neighbours which limit the cost of labour. In all this the operation of localism and the 'moral economy' is crucial. Thus the typical farmer in this category can be defined in economic terms as a 100-150 acre dairy farmer with a mortgage. But in family terms he is also likely to have one or two sons either already working on the farm or desirous of doing so on completion of schooling. Sociologically he is likely to be a 'local' farmer with considerable kinship links within the farming community. His wife is likely to be from a local farming family too. Their life-style will be dominated by farming. Thus the label of 'hardworking farmer' which is one commonly applied to farmers in this situation, is a term which has much more meaning than merely defining the labour input of a particular farmer. It conjures up a range of social and economic attributes.

2. 'The Traditional Farmer'.

Again this category is labelled with a term which would be well understood by most farmers. The 'traditional farmer' is likely to be fully integrated into the local moral economy, with labour provided entirely by the farmer, kin and through reciprocal arrangements. He may 'give' more than he 'receives' in such arrangments, especially to local younger farmers (kin or otherwise) who fall into the 'hardworking' category. Lack of demand/resource pressure, usually a result of the age and family position of the farmer, means that the demands for high production are not great. Although clearly the aim of the farmer will be production for the market his aim is optimum rather than maximum production consistent with 'good farming'. He may have a preference for a particular style of farming which is, in fact, far from being the most profitable alternative available. The typical 'traditional farmer' will be a 100-200 acre livestock farmer with no rent or mortgage payments and no expectation of any major family demands on the farm - either he only has daughters or just the one son. Like the 'hardworking farmer' the world of the 'traditional farmer' will also be dominated by farming, but the form of dominance will be different. Attending market and talking to other farmers will be as important as the constant round of farm tasks.

3. The Succesful Farmer.

The 'successful farmer' is one who faces demand/resource pressure but is able to overcome it without recourse either to the extreme hardwork of the hardworking farmer or extensive involvenent in non-commoditised labour relations. The farmer is likely to have considerable entrepreneurial ability and market acumen. Relations with bank managers and advisers are likely to be far more important to the success of his

business than relations within the local community. The labour on the farm will be partly provided by immediate family members and partly by hired workers or contractors. The typical 'succesful farmer' is the 200-300 acre tenant, either in dairying or livestock and arable farming, the labour component comprising a farmer, son and one or two workers. Although such a farmer will often appear successful to hardworking or traditional neighbours this is the kind of farm which is likely to operate with a bank overdraft and has faced a certain amount of pressure with the high interest rates of recent years. Farmers from a number of rather different backgrounds could occupy this category - the newcomer with capital and no need or inclination to be integrated within the local 'moral economy'; the local farmer who has progressed from being a 'hardworking farmer' and 'distanced' himself somewhat from local farmers; the local farmer who inherited a holding and as a result of education, outside interests, etc, has moved from the traditional category. But all are characterised by business success and relative social isolation vis-a-vis the local farming community.

4. The Gentleman Farmer.

The 'gentleman farmer' faces low demand/resource pressure, often because of the size of farm, and employs a proportion of labour to supplement his own contribution. As with the succesful farmer the category of 'gentleman farmer' merges on the right hand axis with capitalist farming proper. Indeed the term is usually used to describe a particular kind of capitalist producer. In utilising it here I am deliberately using an expression used by farmers to describe those whom they consider to earn a 'comfortable' income and whose employment of labour may not be strictly necesary according to the hardwork ethic of both 'traditional'

and 'hardworking' farmers. Such a farmer is usally referred to as "a bit of a gentleman farmer" implying an aspiration towards capitalist farming which is not fully achievable. The typical 'gentleman farmer' is an owner-occupier of 200-300 acres, with no rental commitments. He may employ two or three workers. His children will often be employed in other occupations.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

All typologies have some limitations, but on the whole the four catetgories highlighted here are well rooted in the data and serve to adequately illustrate the processes determining the forms of production in West Devon family farming. Although the family farming sector is often held to be a unified grouping with common interests and characteristics, it is in fact extremely diverse. A four part typology itself requires an exercise in considerable simplification, and other categorisations could be made which over-ride the four types outlined here. Moreover new social relations and new policies necessitate a constant re-assessment of any attempt to impose order upon this diverse world. In this final section some thought is given to recent changes affecting agriculture and the possible consequences for family farming in West Devon.

Since fieldwork was undertaken in 1979-80 agriculture has entered a period of political crisis, as a result of EEC budgetary problems, surplus production within the EEC and increased concern at the environmental impact of modern agriculture. Nationally farm incomes in

1985 were barely three-quarters, in real terms, of incomes in 1980 and only half the levels of a decade ago. At the same time farmers have seen land values suffering a sustained fall for the first time since before the 1939-45 War. Prices were just about static in 1980 and 1981, increased again up to mid 1984, and then under the impact first of milk quotas and secondly of the more general CAP malaise, fell sharply in the second half of 1984, 1985 and the first half of 1986. During the years in which land values rose land provided collateral for loans. It was easy for farmers to persuade bank managers to make loans or, in some instances, for bank managers to persuade farmers to borrow more. Indeed the banks clearly devoted considerable effort to attracting more agricultural business during the 1960s and 1970s. During these years the traditional mistrust of many farmers for loans was broken down, not least by the hard work undertaken by local bank managers in establishing personal relationships with farmers. Banks are now becoming more wary of this strategy and in 1985 gross capital formation in UK agriculture fell to its lowest real level since 1956 (20). Borrowing to service the trading account has also become increasingly common.

The imposition of milk quotas, imposed in 1984, has perhaps had the most immediate impact on Devon farming. More hired labour has been shed as a result. The drive towards specialisation and high productivity which has characterised the post-war period has, to some extent, abated. Dairy farmers have been encouraged to sacrifice high yields per cow for more efficient production of less milk. MMB and MAFF advisers recommended a reduction in the use of bought-in high protein concentrated cake and better utilisation and management of grassland. An MMB survey has shows how smaller producers (0-50 cows) were slower to respond to the

recommended changes in farm management policy than the medium (50-100 cows) or large (100 + cows) producers (21). The most immediate implications for the Holsworthy area, still dominated by smaller producers, are clear: the smaller family farmers have been slower to adapt to necessary management changes and are therefore more vulnerable to economic pressure. There are a number of other implications. First, milk production is no longer available as an option for a young or 'pressured' farmer, particularly the new entrant or the farmer inheriting a holding. The shifts in type of commodity production and intensity of production through the family cycle, often linked to shifts between categories within the typology, has become considerably more difficult as a result.

As well as improving dairy herd management there has also been a degree of enterpise diversification as farmers have sought new sources of supplementary income. The MMB survey, comparing 1983/84 with 1985/86, showed that cereal acreage had increased by 5.4%, a particularly notable growth considering that dairy farmers were also responding to the need to place more emphasis on grassland production, and that the total area farmed only increased by 1.0%. But the main growth came in the livestock sector. Whereas the number of dairy cows declined by 2.9% the number of beef stock was up by 18.3%, sheep by 16.0%, pigs by 28.3% and poultry by 22.3%. Most of the growth in pigs and poultry occurred on farms with existing pig and poultry enterprises, but many dairy farmers in Devon now keep a few beef cattle or sheep. Others have diversified into tourism or other non-farming activities. Thus the inexorable growth of of farm business specialisation appears to have come to an end. The NFU and government now preach a message of diversification rather than of

intensification.

The implications of these changes for family farming are still not entirely certain. Clearly many producers will be extremely hard pressed if market forces are allowed to play a major part in the strategy to reduce surpluses. For owner-occupiers non-commoditised relations within the moral economy of localism may become crucial survival strategies. However it is by no means clear that the European Community will opt for a return to the 'free market'. Instead discriminatory policies may be adopted which will favour smaller producers. Thus the main monetarist and environmentalist critiques have so far been directed at large farmers. Family farmers, occupy a key position as 'victims' of change in the ideological re-assessment of state policy (22). If this leads to special policy measures to support family farming, direct income support for small producers for example, family farming may undermine still further capitalist production not by virtue of ever more self-exploitation but through the exploitation of a poweful ideological resource. But the ideologues make the same mistake as many academic analysts in failing to recognise the heterogenetity of family producers and in assuming static characteristics about their relations with state, capital and the environment, which ignore the constantly changing relations inherent to a doubly specified unit of production. Policies might fail to produce the results expected.

FOOTNOTES

1. LONG, N. (1986) Commoditization: thesis and antithesis, in LONG, N. PLOEG, J.D. van der, CURTIN, C. and BOX, L. The Commoditization Debate: Labour Process, Strategy and Social Network, Wageningen: Agricultural University. pp.8-23. p.8.

2. ibid. p.13.

3. BECHHOFER, F. and ELLIOT, B. (1976) Persistence and change: the petite bourgeoisie in industrial society, European Journal of Sociology, 17, pp.74-99. p.77.

4. ibid. p.77.

5. This is the group studied most extensively by Bechhofer and Elliot.

6. COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. (1986) The state and the farmer: perspectives on agricultural policy, in COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. Eds. Agriculture: People and Policies, London: George Allen and Unwin. pp.1-19. p.7.

7. I have done subsequent work on agricultural politics at a national level and am currently researching local expressions of agricultural politics through a study of Devon National Farmers' Union.

8. See HOWARTH, R. (1985) Farming for Farmers?, London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

9. The role of farmer as custodian of pastoral and rural values has become somewhat tarnished in recent years as modern agriculture has itself come under increasing fire from environmentalists for dereliction of duty in this respect. See for example the trenchant critiques of contemporary agricultural policy and practice: BODY, R. (1982) Agriculture: the Triumph and the Shame, London: Maurice Temple Smith; BODY, R. (1984) Farming in the Clouds, London: Maurice Temple Smith; BOWERS, J.K. and CHESHIRE, P. (1983) Agriculture, the Countryside and Land Use: an Economic Critique, London: Methuen; LOWE, P. COX, G. MACEWEN, M. O'RIORDIAN, T. and WINTER, M. (1986) Countryside Conflicts: The Politics of Farming, Forestry and Conservation, London: Gower/ Maurice Temple Smith; SHOARD, M. (1980) The Theft of the Countryside, London: Maurice Temple Smith. However the small farmer has largely been immune from attack. This is perhaps most clearly symbolised in the sympathetic involvement of Richard Body in the Smallfarmers' Association, while being highly critical of the National Farmers' Union.

10. On this point and for general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of commoditisation see LONG, N. (1986) op. cit.

11. FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) The family farm in advanced capitalism: outline of a theory of simple commodity production in agriculture, Paper presented to the American Sociological Association, Toronto. p.6.

12. LONG, N. (1986) op. cit.

13. This is a recurrent theme in some of her earlier case-study papers and is given particular theoretical significance in FRIEDMANN, H. (1981) op. cit.

14. Analysing the various theoretical explanations, mainly centring on the nature of land in agricultural production, for the survival of family farming provided much of the early orientation for this study. See: WINTER, M. (1982) What happened to the agrarian bourgeoisie and rural proletariat under monopoly capitalism? A reply to Goran Djurfeldt, Acta Sociologica, 25 (2), pp.147-157; WINTER, M. (1984) Agrarian class structure and family farming, in BRADLEY, T. and LOWE, P. Eds. (1984) Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions, Norwich: Geo Books. pp.115-128.

15. LONG, N. (1986) op. cit. See also SMITH, C. (1984) Forms of production in practice: fresh approaches to simple commodity production, Journal of Peasant Studies, 11 (4), pp.201-221; SMITH, G. (1985) Reflections on the social relations of simple commodity production, Journal of Peasant Studies, 13 (1), pp.99-108.

16. GOODMAN, D. and REDCLIFT, M. (1985) Capitalism, petty commodity production and the farm enterprise, Sociologia Ruralis, 25 (3/4), pp.231-247; FRIEDMANN, H. (1986) Patriarchy and property: a reply to Goodman and Redclift, Sociologia Ruralis, 26 (2), pp.186-193.

17. BECHHOFER, F. and ELLIOT, B. (1981) Petty property: the survival of a moral economy, in BECHHOFER, F. and ELLIOT, B. Eds. The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum, London: Macmillan. pp.182-200.

18. SMITH, G. (1985) op. cit. p.106.

19. ibid.

20. JOHNSON, C. (1986) 'Counting the farmers' assets', Lloyds Bank Economic Bulletin No. 95.

21. A summary of the findings from the MMB survey was presented in Milk Producer, Sept, 1986. pp.24-25. I am grateful to the Board for releasing further details of this survey to me. The Board's permission is required before any of the figures are published.

22. On the implications of recent changes in agricultural policy see: COX, G. LOWE, P. and WINTER, M. (1987) 'Farmers and the state: a crisis for corporatism', Political Quarterly, 58 (1), pp.73-81.

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